POCKET LIBRARY

OF

ENGLISH CLASSICS.

N°. 126.

THE WORKS OF WALTER SCOTT.

VOL. LXXXVII.

POCKET LIBRARY

OF

ENGLISH CLASSICS.

N°. 126.

THE WORKS OF WALTER SCOTT.

VOL. LXXXVII.

THE BOOKS OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

No. 130

ENGLISH CLASSICS

OF

POCKET EDITIONS

R...z 1826

STERNE

THE

WORKS

OF

WALTER SCOTT, Esq.

Vol. LXXXVII.

ZWICKAU,
PRINTED FOR BROTHERS SCHUMANN.
1826.

1830.

JAMAICA

A TALE.

OF

THE

LIVES
OF
THE NOVELISTS.

BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

ZWICKAU,
PRINTED FOR BROTHERS SCHUMANN.
1826.

BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE NOVELISTS

OF

FIVE

CONTENTS.

Vol. II.

	Page
STERNE.	1
MRS RADCLIFFE.	38
RICHARDSON.	100

RICHARDSON 100
MISS MADCIFFE 36
STEVENS 1

Page

Vol. II.

CONTENTS.

LIVES

OF

THE NOVELISTS.

STERNE.

Laurence Sterne was one of those few authors who have anticipated the labours of the biographer, and left to the world what they desired should be known of their family and their life.

«Roger Sterne[1] (says this narrative), grandson to Archbishop Sterne, lieutenant in Handaside's regiment, was married to Agnes Hebert, widow of a captain of a good family. Her family

[1] Mr Sterne was descended from a family of that name, in Suffolk, one of which settled

name was (I believe) Nuttle; though, upon recollection, that was the name of her father-in-law, who was a noted sutler in Flanders, in Queen Anne's wars, where my father married his wife's daughter (N. B. he was in debt to him), which was in September 25, 1711, old style. This Nuttle had a son by my grandmother, — a fine person of a man, but a graceless whelp! — What became of him, I know

---

in Nottinghamshire. The following genealogy is extracted from Thoresby's Ducatus Leodinensis, p. 215.

Simon Sterne, of Mansfield.

Dr Richard Sterne, Archbishop of York, Ob. June, 1683.	=	Elizabeth daughter of Mr Dikinson, Ob. 1670.

1	2	3
Richard Sterne, of York and Kilvington esq. 1700.	William Sterne, of Mansfield.	Simon Sterne, of Elvington, and Halifax Ob. 1703. = Mary, daughter and heiress of Roger Jaques, of Elvington, near York.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Richard.	Roger.	Jaques, L.L.D. Ob. 1759.	Mary.	Elizabeth.	Frances.
Richard					
Laurence Sterne.					

not. The family (if any left) live now at Clonmel, in the south of Ireland; at which town I was born, November 24, 1513, a few days after my mother arrived from Dunkirk. — My birth-day was ominous to my poor father, who was, the day of our arrival, with many other brave officers, broke, and sent adrift into the wide world, with a wife and two children, — the elder of which was Mary. She was born at Lisle, in French Flanders, July 10, 1712, new style. — This child was the most unfortunate: — She married one Weemans, in Dublin, who used her most unmercifully; spent his substance, became a bankrupt, and left my poor sister to shift for herself; which she was able to do but for a few months, for she went to a friend's house in the country, and died of a broken heart. She was a most beautiful woman, of a fine figure, and deserved a better fate. — The regiment in which my father served being broke, he left Ireland as soon as I was able to be carried, with the rest of his family, and came to the family seat at Elvington, near York, where his mother lived. She was daughter to Sir Roger Jaques, and an heiress. There we sojourned for about ten months, when the regiment was established, and our household decamped with bag and baggage for Dublin. Within a month of our arrival, my father left us, being ordered

to Exeter; where in a sad winter, my mother and her two children followed kim, travelling from Liverpool, by land, to Plymouth. — (Melancholy description of this journey, not necessary to be transmitted here.) — In twelve months we were all sent back to Dublin. My mother, with three of us (for she lay-in at Plymouth of a boy, Joram) took ship at Bristol, for Ireland, and had a narrow escape from being cast away, by a leak springing up in the vessel. — At length, after many perils and struggles, we got to Dublin. — There my father took a large house, furnished it, and, in a year and a half's time, spent a great deal of money. In the year 1719, all unhinged again; the regiment was ordered, with many others, to the Isle of Wight, in order to embark for Spain, in the Vigo expedition. We accompanied the regiment, and were driven into Milford-Haven, but landed at Bristol; from thence, by land, to Plymouth again, and to the Isle of Wight; — where, I remember, we stayed encamped some time before the embarkation of the troops — (in this expedition, from Bristol to Hampshire, we lost poor Joram, a pretty boy, four years old, of the small pox) — my mother, sister, and myself, remained at the Isle of Wight during the Vigo expedition, and until the regiment had got back to Wicklow, in Ireland; from whence my father sent

for us. — We had poor Joram's loss supplied, during our stay in the Isle of Wight, by the birth of a girl, Anne, born September 23, 1719. — This pretty blossom fell, at the age of three years, in the barracks of Dublin. She was, as I well remember, of a fine delicate frame, not made to last long, — as were most of my father's babes. We embarked for Dublin, and had all been cast away by a most violent storm; but, through the intercessions of my mother, the captain was prevailed upon to turn back into Wales, where we staid a month, and at length got to Dublin, and travelled by land to Wicklow, where my father had for some weeks given us over for lost. We lived in the barracks at Wicklow one year — (one thousand seven hundred and twenty) when Devijeher (so called after Colonel Devijeher) was born: from thence we decamped to stay half a year with Mr Featherston, a clergyman, about seven miles from Wicklow; who, being a relation of my mother's, invited us to his parsonage at Animo. It was in this parish, during our stay, that I had that wonderful escape in falling through a mill-race whilst the mill was going, and of being taken up unhurt; the story is incredible, but known for truth in all that part of Ireland, where hundreds of the common people flocked to see me. From hence we followed the regiment to

Dublin, where we lay in the barracks a year. In this year (1721), I learnt to write, etc. The regiment ordered in twenty-two to Carrickfergus, in the north of Ireland. We all decamped; but got no farther than Drogheda; — thence ordered to Mullengar, forty miles west; where, by Providence, we stumbled upon a kind relation, a collateral descendant from Archbishop Sterne, who took us all to his castle, and kindly entertained us for a year, and sent us to the regiment to Carrickfergus, loaded with kindnesses, etc. A most rueful and tedious journey had we all (in March) to Carrickfergus, where we arrived in six or seven days. —Little Devijeher here died; he was three years old; he had been left behind at nurse at a farmhouse near Wicklow, but was fetched to us by my father the summer after. — Another child sent to fill his place, Susan. This babe, too, left us behind in this weary journey. The autumn of that year, or the spring afterwards (I forget which), my father got leave of his colonel to fix me at school, — which he did near Halifax, with an able master, with whom I stayed some time, till, by God's care of me, my cousin Sterne, of Elvington, became a father to me, and sent me to the University, etc. etc. To pursue the thread of our story, my father's regiment was, the year after, ordered to Lon-

donderry, where another sister was brought forth, Catherine, still living; but most unhappily estranged from me by my uncle's wickedness ané her own folly. From this station the regiment was sent to defend Gibraltar, at the siege, where my father was run through the body by Captain Philips, in a duel (the quarrel began about a goose!); with much difficulty he survived, though with an impaired constitution, which was not able to withstand the hardships it was put to; for he was sent to Jamaica, where he soon fell by the country fever, which took away his senses first, and made a child of him; and then, in a month or two, walking about continually without complaining, till the moment he sat down in an arm-chair, and breathed his last, which was at Port Antonio, on the north of the island. My father was a little smart man, active to the last degree in all exercises, most patient of fatigue and disappointments, of which it pleased God to give him full measure. He was, in his temper, somewhat rapid and hasty, but of a kindly sweet disposition, void of all design; and so innocent in his own intentions, that he suspected no one; so that you might have cheated him ten times in a day, if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose. My poor father died in March, 1731. I remained in Halifax till about the latter end

of that year, and cannot omit mentioning this anecdote of myself and schoolmaster: — He had the ceiling of the school-room new whitewashed; the ladder remained there. I, one unlucky day, mounted it, and wrote with a brush, in large capital letters, LAU. STERNE, for which the usher severely whipped me. My master was very much hurt at this, and said, before me, that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius, and he was sure I should come to preferment. This expression made me forget the stripes I had received. In the year 32,[1] my cousin sent me to the University, where I staid some time. 'Twas there that I commenced a friendship with Mr H—, which has been lasting on both sides. I then came to York, and my uncle got me the living of Sutton; and at York I became acquainted with your mother, and courted her for two years; — she owned she liked me, but thought herself not rich

---

[1] He was admitted of Jesus College, in the University of Cambridge, July 6, 1733, under the tuition of Mr Cannon.
Matriculated March 29, 1735.
Admitted to the degree of B.A., in January 1736.
Admitted M.A., at the commencement of 1740,

enough, or me too poor, to be joined together. She went to her sister's in S—; and I wrote to her often. I believe then she was partly determined to have me, but would not say so. At her return, she fell into a consumption;—and one evening that I was sitting by her, with an almost broken heart to see her so ill, she said, 'My dear Lauray, I can never be yours, for I verily believe I have not long to live! but I have left you every shilling of my fortune.' Upon that she showed me her will. This generosity overpowered me. It pleased God that she recovered, and I married her in the year 1741. My uncle [1] and myself were then upon very good terms; for he soon got me the Prebendary of York; — but he quarrelled with me afterwards, because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers; — though he was a party-man I was not, and detested such dirty work, thinking it beneath me. From that period he became

---

[1] Jaques Sterne, L.L.D. He was Prebendary of Durham, Canon Residentiary, Precentor and Prebendary of York, Rector of Rise, and Rector of Hornsey cum Riston, both in the East Riding of the county of York. He died June 9, 1759

my bitterest enemy.[1] By my wife's means I got the living of Stillington; a friend of hers, in the south, had promised her, that, if she married a clergyman in Yorkshire, when the living became vacant, he would make her a compliment of it. I remained nearly twenty years at Sutton, doing duty at both places. I had then very good health. Books, painting,[2] fiddling and shooting, were my amusements. As to the squire of the parish, I cannot say we were upon a very friendly footing; but at Stillington, the family of the C—s showed us every kindness: — 'twas most truly agreeable to be within a mile and a half of an amiable family, who were ever cordial friends. In the year 1760, I took a house at York for your mother and yourself, and went up to London to pub-

---

[1] It hath, however, been insinuated, that he for some time wrote a periodical electioneering paper at York, in defence of the Whig Interest.—*Monthly Review*, vol. 53, p. 344.

[2] A specimen of Mr Sterne's abilities in the art of designing may be seen in Mr Woodhul's poems, 8vo. 1772.

lish [1] my first two volumes of Shandy. [2] In that year, Lord Falconbridge presented me with the

---

[1] The first edition was printed in the preceding year at York.

[2] The following is the order in which Mr Sterne's publications appeared :—

1747. The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zerephath considered. A Charity Sermon, preached on Good Eriday, April 17, 1747, for the support of Two Charity Schools in York.

1750. The Abuses of Conscience. Set forth in a Sermon preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter's, York, at the Summer Assizes, before the Hon. Mr Baron Clive, and the Hon. Mr Baron Smythe, on Sunday, July 29, 1750.

1759. Vol. 1 and 2 of Tristram Shandy.
1760. Vol. 1 and 2 of Sermons.
1761. Vol. 3 and 4 of Tristram Shandy.
1762. Vol. 5 and 6 of Tristram Shandy.
1765. Vol. 7 and 8 of Tristram Shandy.
1766. Vol. 3, 4, 5 and 6, of Sermons.
1767. Vol. 9. of Tristram Shandy.
1768. The Sentimental Journey.

The remainder of his works were published after his death.

curacy of Coxwould; a sweet retirement in comparison of Sutton. In 62, I went to France, before the peace was concluded, and you both followed me. I left you both in France, and in two years after, I went to Italy, for the recovery of my health; and, when I called upon you, I tried to engage your mother to return to England with me: [1] she and yourself are at length come, and I have had the inexpressible joy of seeing my girl every thing I wished for.

«*I have set down these particulars relating to my family and self, for my Lydia, in case hereafter she might have a curiosity, or a kinder motive, to know them.*»

To these notices, the following brief account of his death has been added by another writer: —

«As Mr Sterne, in the foregoing narrative, hath brought down the account of himself until within a few months of his death, it remains only to mention, that he left York about the end of the year 1767, and came to London, in order to publish *The Sentimental Journey*, which he had written during the preceding summer,

---

[1] From this passage, it appears that the present account of Mr Sterne's life and family were written about six months only before his death.

at his favourite living of Coxwould. His health had been for some time declining; but he continued to visit his friends. and retained his usual flow of spirits. In Feb. 1768, he began to perceive the approaches of death; and with the concern of a good man, and the solicitude of an affectionate parent, devoted his attention to the future welfare of his daughter. His letters, at this period, reflect so much credit on his character, that it is to be lamented some others in the collection were permitted to see the light. After a short struggle with his disorder, his debilitated and worn-out frame submitted to fate on the 18th day of March, 1768, at his lodgings in Bond Street. He was buried at the new burying ground, belonging to the parish of St George, Hanover Square, on the 22d of the same month, in the most private manner; and hath since been indebted to strangers for a monument very unworthy of his memory; on which the following lines are inscribed: —

Near to this place
Lies the body of
The Rev. Laurence Sterne, A.M.
Died September 13, 1768,[1]
Aged 53 years."

---

[1] It is scarcely necessary to observe that this date is erroneous.

To these memoirs we can only add a few circumstances. The Archbishop of York, referred to as great grandfather of the Author, was Dr Richard Sterne, who died in June, 1683. The family came from Suffolk to Nottinghamshire, and are described by Guillam as bearing, Or a cheveron, between three crosses flory sable. The crest is that Starling proper, which the pen of Yorick has rendered immortal.

Sterne was educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, and took the degree of M.A. there in 1740. His protector and patron, in the outset of life, was his uncle Jaques Sterne, D.D., who was Prebendary of Durham, Canon Residentiary, Precentor, and Prebendary of York, with other good preferments; Dr Sterne was a keen Whig, and zealous supporter of the Hanoverian succession. The politics of the times being particulary violent, he was engaged in many controversies, particularly with Dr Richard Burton (the original of Dr Slop), whom he had arrested upon a charge of high-treason, during the affair of 1745. Laurence Sterne, in the Memoir which precedes these notices, represents himself as having quarrelled with his uncle, because he would not assist him with his pen in controversies of this description.

When settled in Yorkshire, Sterne has represented his time as much engaged with books,

fiddling, and painting. The former seem to have been in a great measure supplied by the library of Skelton Castle, the abode of his intimate friend and relation, John Hall Stevenson, author of the witty and indecent collection, entitled *Crazy Tales*, where there is a very humorous description of his ancient residence, under the name of Crazy Castle. This library had the same cast of antiquity which belonged to the castle itself, and doubtless contained much of that rubbish of ancient literature in which the labour and ingenuity of Sterne contrived to find a mine. Until 1759, Sterne had only printed two sermons; but in that year he surprised the world, by publishing the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne states himself, in a letter to a friend, as being «tired of employing his brains for other people's advantage — a foolish sacrifice I have made for some years to an ungrateful person.» — This passage probably alludes to his quarrel with his uncle; and as he mentions having taken a small house in York, for the education of his daughter, it is probable that he looked to his pen for some assistance, though, in a letter to a nameless doctor, who had accused him of writing in order to have *nummum in loculo*, he declares he wrote not to be fed, but to be famous. *Tristram*, however, procured the author both fame and profit. The

brilliant genius which mingled with so much real or affected eccentricity, — the gaping astonishment of the readers who could not conceive the drift or object of the publication, with the ingenuity of those who attempted to discover the meaning of passages which really had none, gave the book a most extraordinary degree of *éclat*. But the applause of the public was not unmingled with censure. Sterne was not on good terms with his professional brethren: he had too much wit, and too little forbearance in the use of it; too much vivacity, and too little respect for his cloth and character, to maintain the formalities, not to say the decencies, of the clerical station; and he had, in the full career of his humour, assigned to some of his grave compeers ridiculous epithets and characters, which they did not resent the less, that they were certainly witty, and probably applicable. Indeed, to require a man to pardon an insult on account of the wit which accompanies the infliction, although it is what jesters often seem to expect, is desiring him to admire the painted feathers which wing the dart by which he is wounded. The tumult was therefore loud on all sides; but amid shouts of applause and cries of censure the notoriety of *Tristram* spread still wider and wider, and the fame of Sterne rose in proportion. The author

therefore triumphed, and bid the critics defiance. «I shall be attacked and pelted,» he says, in one of his letters, «either from cellar or garret, write what I will; and besides, must expect to have a party against me of many hundreds, who either do not, or will not, laugh — 'tis enough that I divide the world — at least I will rest contented with it.» On another occasion, he says, «If my enemies knew that, by this rage of abuse and ill-will, they were effectually serving the interests both of myself and works, they would be more quiet; but it has been the fate of my betters, who have found that the way to fame is like the way to heaven, through much tribulation; and till I shall have the honour to be as much maltreated as Rabelais and Swift were, I must continue humble, for I have not filled up the measure of half their persecutions.»

The author went to London to enjoy his fame, and met with all that attention which the public gives to men of notoriety. He boasts of being engaged fourteen dinners deep, and received this hospitality as a tribute; while his contemporaries saw the festivity in a very different light. «Any man who has a name, or who has the power of pleasing,» said Johnson, «will be very generally invited in London. The *man Sterne*, I am told, has had engagements

for three months.» Johnson's feelings of morality and respect for the priesthood led him to speak of Sterne with contempt; but, when Goldsmith added, «and a very dull fellow,» he replied, with his emphatic, «Why, no, sir.»

The first two volumes of *Tristram* proved introductors — singular in their character, certainly — to two volumes of sermons which the simple name of the Reverend Laurence Sterne (ere yet he became known as the author of a fine novel) would never have recommended to notice, but which were sought for and read eagerly under that of Yorick. They maintained the character of the author for wit, genius, and eccentricity.

The third and fourth volumes of *Tristram* appeared in 1761, and the fifth and sixth in 1762. Both these publications were as popular as the first two volumes. The seventh and eighth, which came forth in 1765, did uot attract so much attention. The novelty was in a great measure over; and, although they contain some of the most beautiful passages that ever fell from the author's pen, yet neither Uncle Toby nor his faithful attendant were sufficient to attract the public attention in the same degree as before. Thus the popularity of this singular work was, for a time, impeded by that singular

and affected style, which had at first attracted by its novelty, but which ceased to please when it was no longer new. Four additional volumes of sermons appeared in 1768; and, in 1767, the ninth and last volume of *Tristram Shandy*. «I shall publish," he says, «but one this year; and the next I shall begin a new work of four volumes, which, when finished, I shall continue *Tristram* with fresh spirit."

The new work was unquestionably his *Sentimental Journey*; for which, according to the evidence of La Fleur, Sterne had made much larger collections than were ever destined to see the light. The author's health was now become extremely feeble, and his Italian travels were designed, if possible, to relieve his consumptive complaints. The remedy proved unsuccessful; yet he lived to arrive in England, and to prepare for the press the first part of the *Sentimental Journey*, which was published in 1768.

In this place we may insert with propriety those notices of Sterne and his valet La Fleur, which appear in Mr Davis's interesting selection of anecdotes, which he has entitled an *Olio*.

«La Fleur was born in Burgundy: when a mere child, he conceived a strong passion to see the world, and at eight years of age ran away from his parents. His prevenancy was always his passport, and his wants were easily

supplied — milk, bread, and a straw-bed amongst the peasantry, were all he wanted for the night, and in the morning he wished to be on his way again. This rambling life he continued till he attained his tenth year, when, being one day on the Pont-Neuf, at Paris, surveying with wonder the objects that surrounded him, he was accosted by a drummer, who easily enlisted him in the service. For six years La Fleur beat his drum in the French army; two years more would have entitled him to his discharge, but he preferred anticipation, and, exchanging dress with a peasant, easily made his escape. By having recourse to his old expedients, he made his way to Montreuil, where he introduced himself to Varenne, who fortunately took a fancy to him. The little accommodations he needed were given to him with cheerfulness; and, as what we sow we wish to see flourish, this worthy landlord promised to get him a master; and, as he deemed the best not better than La Fleur merited, he promised to recommend him to *un milord anglais*. He fortunately could perform as well as promise, and he introduced him to Sterne, ragged as a colt, but full of health and hilarity. The little picture which Sterne has drawn of La Fleur's amours is so far true — He was fond of a very pretty girl at Montreuil, the elder of two sisters, who, if living, he said,

resembled the Maria of Moulines; her he afterwards married, and whatever proof it might be of his affection, was none of his prudence, for it made him not a jot richer or happier than he was before. She was a mantua-maker, and her closest applicatiou could produce no more than *six sous* a day. Finding that her assistance could go little towards their support, and after having had a daughter by her, they separated, and he went to service. At length, with what money he had got together by his servitude, he returned to his wife, and they took a public-house in Royal-street, Calais. — There ill-luck attended him, — war broke out, and the loss of the English sailors, who navigated the packets, and who were his principal customers, so reduced his little business, that he was obliged again to quit his wife, and confide to her guidance the little trade which was insufficient to support them both. He returned in March, 1783, but his wife had fled. A strolling company of comedians passing through the town, had seduced her from her home, and no tale or tidings of her have ever since reached him. From the period he lost his wife, says our informant, he has frequently visited England, to whose natives he is extremely partial, sometimes as a sergeant, at others as an express. Where zeal

and diligence were required La Fleur was never yet wanting."

In addition to La Fleur's account of himself (continues Mr Davis), the writer of the preceding obtained from him several little circumstances relative to his master, as well as the characters depicted by him, a few of which, as they would lose by abridgement, I shall give *verbatim*.

«There were moments," said La Fleur, «in which my master appeared sunk into the deepest dejection — when his calls upon me for my services were so seldom, that I sometimes apprehensively pressed in upon his privacy, to suggest what I thought might divert his melancholy. He used to smile at my well-meant zeal, and, I could see, was happy to be relieved. At others, he seemed to have received a new soul — he launched into the levity natural *à mon pays*," said La Fleur, «and cried gaily enough, '*vive la bagatelle!*' It was in one of those moments that he became acquainted with the *grisette* at the gloveshop — she afterwards visited him at his lodgings, upon which La Fleur made not a single remark; but, on naming the *fille de chambre*, his other visitant, he exclaimed, 'It was certainly a pity she was so pretty and *petite.*'»

The lady mentioned under the initial L. was the Marquise Lamberti; to the interest of this

lady he was indebted for the passport, which began to make him seriously uneasy. Count de B. (Breteuil), notwithstanding the Shakspeare, La Fleur thinks, would have troubled himself little about him. Choiseul was minister at the time.

«*Poor Maria*

Was, alas! no fiction. — When we came up to her, she was grovelling in the road like an infant, and throwing the dust upon her head — and yet few were more lovely. Upon Sterne's accosting her with tenderness, and raising her in his arms, she collected herself, and resumed some composure — told him her tale of misery, and wept upon his breast — my master sobbed aloud. I saw her gently disengage herself from his arms, and she sung him the service to the virgin; my poor master covered his face with his hands, and walked by her side to the cottage where she lived; there he talked earnestly to the old woman.»

«Every day,» said La Fleur, «while we stayed there, I carried them meat and drink from the hotel, and when we departed from Moulines, my master left his blessings and some money with the mother.» — «How much,» added he, «I know not — he always gave more than he could afford.»

Sterne was frequently at a loss upon his travels for ready money. Remittances were become interrupted by war, and he had wrongly estimated his expenses; he had reckoned along the post-roads, without adverting to the wretchedness that was to call upon him in his way.

«At many of our stages my master has turned to me with tears in his eyes — 'These poor people oppress me, La Fleur; how shall I relieve them?' He wrote much, and to a late hour.» I told La Fleur of the inconsiderable quantity he had published; he expressed extreme surprise. «I know,» said he, «upon our return from this tour, there was a large trunk completely filled with papers.» «Do you know any thing of their tendency, La Fleur?» «Yes, they were miscellaneous remarks upon the manners of the different nations he visited; and, in Italy, he was deeply engaged in making the most elaborate inquiries into the different governments of the towns, and the characteristic peculiarities of the Italians of the various states.»

To effect this, he read much; for the collections of the patrons of literature were upon to him; he observed more. Singular as it may seem, Sterne endeavoured in vain to speak Italian. His valet acquired it on their journey; but his master, though he applied now and then, gave it up at length as unattainable. — «I the

more wondered at this," said La Fleur, «as he must have understood Latin."

The assertion, sanctioned by Johnson, that Sterne was licentious and dissolute in conversation, stands thus far contradicted by the testimony of La Fleur: «His conversation with women," he said, «was of the most interesting kind; he usually left them serious, if he did not find them so."

The dead Ass

Was no inventiou. The mourner was as simple and affecting as Sterne has related. La Fleur recollected the circumstance perfectly.

To Monks

Sterne never exhibited any particular sympathy. La Fleur remembered several pressing in upon him, to all of whom his answer was the same — *Mon père, je suis occupé. Je suis pauvre comme vous.*

In February, 1768, Laurence Sterne, his frame exhausted by long debilitating illness, expired at his lodgings in Bond-street, London. There was something in the manner of his death singularly resembling the particulars detailed by

Mrs Quickly, as attending that of Falstaff, the compeer of Yorick for infinite jest, however unlike in other particulars. As he lay on his bed totally exhausted, he complained that his feet were cold, and requested the female attendant to chafe them. She did so, and it seemed to relieve him. He complained that the cold came up higher; and whilst the assistant was in the act of chafing his ancles and legs, he expired without a groan. It was also remarkable that his death took place much in the manner which he himself had wished; and that the last offices were rendered him, not in his own house, or by the hand of kindred affection, but in an inn, and by strangers.

We are well acquainted with Sterne's features and personal appearance, to which he himself frequently alludes. He was tall and thin, with a hectic and consumptive appearance. His features, though capable of expressing with peculiar effect the sentimental emotions by which he was often affected, had also a shrewd, humorous, and sarcastic expression, proper to the wit and the satirist. His conversation was animated and witty; but Johnson complained that it was marked by licence, better suiting the company of the Lord of Crazy Castle, than of the great Moralist. It has been said, and probably with truth, that this temper was variable

and unequal, the natural consequence of irritable temperament, and continued bad health. But we will not readily believe that the parent of uncle Toby could be a harsh, or habitually a bad-humoured man. Sterne's letters to his friends, and especially to his daughter, breathe all the fondness of affection; and his resources, such as they were, seem to have been always at the command of those whom he loved.

If we consider Sterne's reputation as chiefly founded upon *Tristram Shandy*, he must be considered as liable to two severe charges; — those, namely, of indecency, and of affectation. Upon the first accusation Sterne himself was peculiarly sore, and used to justify the licentiousness of his humour by representing it as a mere breach of decorum, which had no perilous consequence to morals. The following anecdote we have from a sure source. Soon after *Tristram* had appeared, Sterne asked a Yorkshire lady of fortune and condition whether she had read his book. «I have not, Mr Sterne,» was the answer; «and, to be plain with you, I am informed it is not proper for female perusal.» — «My dear good lady.» replied the author, «do not be gulled by such stories; the book is like your young heir there, (pointing to a child of three years old, who was rolling on the carpet in his white tunics) he show sat times a good

deal that is usually concealed, but it is all in perfect innocence!" This witty excuse may be so far admitted; for it cannot be said that the licentious humour of *Tristram Shandy* is of the kind which applies to the passions, or is calculated to corrupt society. But it is a sin against taste, if allowed to be harmless as to morals. A handful of mud is neither a fire brand nor a stone; bnt to fling it about in sport, argues coarseness of taste, and want of common manners.

Sterne, however, began and ended by braving the censure of the world in this particular. A remarkable passage in one of his letters shows how lightly he was disposed to esteem the charge; and what is singular enough, his plan for turning it into ridicule seems to have been serious. «Crebillon (*le fils*) has made a convention with me, which, if he is not too lazy, will be no bad *persiflage*. As soon as I get to Toulouse, he has agreed to write me an expostulatory letter on the indecencies of *Tristram Shandy* — which is to be answered by recrimination upon the liberties in his own works. These are to be printed together — Crebillon against Sterne — Sterne against Crebillon — the copy to be sold, and the money equally divided: this is good Swiss policy."

In like manner, the greatest admirers of Sterne

must own, that his style is affected, eminently, and in a degree which even his wit and pathos are inadequate to support. The style of Rabelais, which he assumed for his model, it to the highest excess rambling, excursive, and intermingled with the greatest absurdities. But Rabelais was in some measure compelled to adopt this harlequin's habit, in order that, like licensed jesters, he might, under the cover of his folly, have permission to vent his satire against church and state. Sterne assumed the manner of his master, only as a mode of attracting attention, and of making the public stare; and, therefore, his extravagancies, like those of a feigned madman, are cold and forced, even in the midst of his most irregular flights. A man may, in the present day, be, with perfect impunity, as wise or as witty as he can, without assuming the cap and bells of the ancient jester as an apology; and that Sterne chose voluntarily to appear under such a disguise, must be set down as mere affection, and ranked with the tricks of black or marbled pages, as used merely *ad captandum vulgus*. All popularity thus founded, carries in it the seeds of decay; for eccentricity in composition, like fantastic modes of dress, however attractive when first introduced, is sure to be caricatured by stupid imita-

tors, to become soon unfashionable, and of course to be neglected.

If we proceed to look more closely into the manner of composition which Sterne thought proper to adopt, we find a sure guide in the ingenious Dr Ferriar, of Manchester, who, with most singular patience, has traced our author through the hidden sources whence he borrowed most of his learning, and many of his more striking and peculiar expressions. Rabelais (much less read than spoken of), the lively but licentious miscellany called *Moyen de parvenir*, and D'Aubigné's *Baron de Fœneste*, with many other forgotten authors of the sixteenth century, were successively laid under contribution. Burton's celebrated work on Melancholy (which Dr Ferriar's Essay instantly raised to double price in the bookmarket) afforded Sterne an endless mass of quotations, with which he unscrupulously garnished his pages, as if they had been collected in the course of his own extensive reading. The style of the same author, together with that of Bishop Hall, furnished the author of *Tristram* with many of those whimsical expressions, similes, and illustrations, which were long believed the genuine effusions of his own eccentric wit. For proofs of this sweeping charge we must refer the readers to Dr Ferriar's well-known Essay and Illustrations, as

he delicately terms them, of Sterne's Writings, in which it is clearly shown, that he, whose manner and style were so long thought original, was, in fact, the most unhesitating plagiarist who ever cribbed from his predecessors in order to garnish his own pages. It must be owned, at the same time, that Sterne selects the materials of his mosaic work with so much art, places them so well, and polishes them so highly, that in most cases we are disposed to pardon the want of originality, in consideration of the exquisite talent with which the borrowed materials are wrought up into the new form.

One of Sterne's most singular thefts, considering the tenor of the passage stolen, is his declamation against literary depredators of his own class: «Shall we,» says Sterne, «for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new medicines, by pouring only out of one vessel into another? Are we for ever to be twisting and untwisting the same rope — for ever in the same track — for ever at the same pace?» The words of Burton are, «As apothecaries, we make new mixtures, every day pour out of one vessel into another; and as the Romans robbed all the cities in the world to set out their bad-sited Rome, we skim the cream of other men's wits, pick the choice flowers of their tilled gardens, to set out our own sterile plots. We weave the

same web, still twist the same rope again and again." We cannot help wondering at the coolness with which Sterne could transfer to his own work so eloquent a tirade against the very arts which he was practising.

Much has been said about the right of an author to avail himself of his predecessors' labours; and, certainly, in a general sense, he that revives the wit and learning of a former age, and puts it into the form likely to captivate his own, confers a benefit on his contemporaries. But to plume himself with the very language and phrases of former writers, and to pass their wit and learning for his own, was the more unworthy in Sterne, as he had enough of original talent, had he chosen to exert it, to have dispensed with all such acts of literary petty larceny.

Tristram Shandy is no narrative, but a collection of scenes, dialogues, and portraits, humorous or affecting, intermixed with much wit and with much learning, original or borrowed. It resembles the irregularities of a gothic room, built by some fanciful collector, to contain the miscellaneous remnants of antiquity which his pains have accumulated, and bearing as little proportion in its parts, as the pieces of rusty armour with which it is decorated. Viewing it in this light, the principal figure is Mr Shandy the elder, whose character is formed, in many

respects, upon that of Martinus Scriblerus. The history of Martin was designed by the celebrated club of wits, by whom it was commenced, as a satire upon the ordinary pursuits of learning and science. Sterne, on the contrary, had no particular object of ridicule; his business was only to create a person, to whom he could attach the great quantity of extraordinary reading, and antiquated learning which he had collected. He, therefore, supposed in Mr Shandy a man of an active and metaphysical, but, at the same time, a whimsical cast of mind, whom too much and too miscellaneous learning had brought within a step or two of madness, and who acts, in the ordinary affairs of life, upon the absurd theories adopted by the pedants of past ages. He is most admirably contrasted with his wife, well described as a good lady of the true *poco-curante* school, who neither obstructed the progress of her husband's hobbyhorse, to use a phrase which Sterne has rendered classical, nor could be prevailed upon to spare him the least admiration for the grace and dexterity with which he managed it.

Yorick, the lively, witty, sensitive, and heedless parson, is the well-known personification of Sterne himself, and undoubtedly, like every portrait of himself, drawn by a master of the art, bore a strong resemblance to the original.

Still, however, there are shades of simplicity thrown into the character of Yorick, which did not exist in that of Sterne. We cannot believe that the jests of the latter were so void of malice prepense, or that his satire entirely flowed out of honesty of mind and mere jocundity of humour. It must be owned, moreover, that Sterne was more likely to have stolen a passage out of Stevinus, if he could have found one to his purpose, than to have left one of his manuscripts in the volume, with the careless indifference of Yorick. Still, however, we gladly recognise the general likeness between the author and the child of his fancy, and willingly pardon the pencil which, in the delicate task of self delineation, has softened some traits, and improved others.

Uncle Toby, with his faithful squire, the most delightful characters in the work, or perhaps in any other, are drawn with such a pleasing force and discrimination that they more than entitle the author to a free pardon for his literary peculations, his indecorum, and his affectation; nay, authorize him to leave the court of criticism, not forgiven only, but applauded and rewarded, as one who has exalted and honoured humanity, and impressed upon his readers such a lively picture of kindness and benevolence, blended with courage, gallantry, and simplicity,

that their hearts must be warmed by it whenever it is recalled to memory. Sterne, indeed, might boldly plead in his own behalf, that the passages which he borrowed from others were of little value, in comparison to those which are exclusively original; and that the former might have been written by many persons, while in his own proper line he stands alone and inimitable. Something of extravagance may, perhaps, attach to Uncle Toby's favourite amusements. Yet in England, where men think and act with little regard to the ridicule or censure of their neighbours, there is no impossibility, perhaps no great improbability, in supposing, that a humourist might employ such a mechanical aid as my Uncle's bowling-green, in order to encourage and assist his imagination, in the pleasing but delusive task of castle building. Men have been called children of a larger growth, and among the antic toys and devices with which they are amused, the device of my Uncle, with whose pleasures we are so much disposed to sympathize, does not seem so unnatural upon reflection, as it may appear at first sight.

It is well known (through Dr Ferriar's labours) that Dr Slop, with all his obstetrical engines, may be identified with Dr Burton, of York, who published a treatise of Midwifery in 1751. This person, as we have elsewhere noticed, was on

bad terms with Sterne's uncle; and though there had come strife and unkindness between the uncle and the nephew, yet the latter seems to have retained aversion against the enemy of the former. But Sterne, being no politician, had forgiven the Jacobite, and only persecutes the Doctor with his raillery, as a quack and a catholic.

It is needless to dwell longer on a work so generally known. The style employed by Sterne is fancifully ornamented, but at the same time vigorous and masculine, and full of that animation and force which can only be derived by an intimate acquaintance with the early English prose-writers. In the power of approaching and touching the finer feelings of the heart, he has never been excelled, if indeed, he has ever been equalled; and may be at once recorded as one of the most affected, and one of the most simple writers, — as one of the greatest plagiarists, and one of the most original geniuses whom England has produced. Dr Ferriar, who seemed born to trace and detect the various mazes through which Sterne carried on his depredations upon ancient and dusty authors, apologizes for the rigour of his inquest, by doing justice to those merits which were peculiarly our author's own. We cannot better close this article than with the sonnet in which his inge-

nious inquisitor makes the *amende honorable* to the shade of Yorick.

«Sterne, for whose sake I plod through miry ways,
Of antique wit and quibbling mazes drear,
Let not thy shade malignant censure fear,
Though ought of borrowed mirth my search betrays.
Long slept that mirth in dust of ancient days;
(Erewhile to Guise or wanton Valois dear)
Till waked by thee, in Skelton's joyous pile,
She flung on Tristram her capricious rays;
But the quick tear that checks our wondering smile,
In sudden pause, or unexpected story,
Owns thy true mastery — and Lefevre's woes,
Maria's wanderings, and the prisoner's throes,
Fix thee conspicuous on the throne of glory.»

MRS ANN RADCLIFFE.

The life of Mrs Ann Radcliffe, spent in the quiet shade of domestic privacy, and in the interchange of familiar affections and sympathies, appears to have been as retired and sequestered, as the fame of her writings was brilliant and universal. The most authentic account of her birth, family, and personal appearance, seems to be that contained in the following communication to a work of contemporary biography.

«She was born in London, in the year 1764 (9th July); the daughter of William and Ann Ward, who, though in trade, were nearly the only persons of their two families not living in handsome, or at least easy independence. Her paternal grandmother was a Cheselden, the sister of the celebrated surgeon, of whose kind regard her father had a grateful recollection, and some of whose presents, in books, I have seen. The

late Lieutenant Colonel Cheselden, of Somerby in Leicestershire, was, I think, another nephew of the surgeon. Her father's aunt, the late Mrs Barwell, first of Leicester, and then of Duffield in Derbyshire, was one of the sponsors at her baptism. Her maternal grandmother was Ann Oates, the sister of Dr Samuel Jebb, of Stratford, who was the father of Sir Richard: on that side she was also related to Dr Halifax, Bishop of Gloucester, and to Dr Halifax, physician to the king. Perhaps it may gratify curiosity to state farther, that she was descended from a near relative of the De Witts of Holland. In some family papers which I have seen, it is stated, that a De Witt, of the family of John and Cornelius, came to England, under the patronage of government, upon some design of draining the fens in Lincolnshire, bringing with him a daughter, Amelia, then an infant. The prosecution of the plan is supposed to have been interrupted by the rebellion, in the time of Charles the First; but De Witt appears to have passed the remainder of his life in a mansion near Hull, and to have left many children, of whom Amelia was the mother of one of Mrs Radcliffe's ancestors.

«This admirable writer, whom I remember from about the time of her twentieth year, was, in her youth, of a figure exquisitely pro-

portioned, while she resembled her father, and his brother and sister, in being low of stature. Her complexion was beautiful, as was her whole countenance, especially her eyes, eyebrows, and mouth. Of the faculties of her mind let her works speak. Her tastes were such as might be expected from those works. To contemplate the glories of creation, but more particularly the grander features of their display, was one of her chief delights: to listen to fine music was another. She had also a gratification in listening to any good verbal sounds; and would desire to hear passages repeated from the Latin and Greek classics; requiring, at intervals, the most literal translations that could be given, with all that was possible of their idiom, how much so ever the version might be embarrassed by that aim at exactness. Though her fancy was prompt, and she was, as will readily be supposed, qualified in many respects for conversation, she had not the confidence and presence of mind, without which, a person conscious of being observed, can scarcely be at ease, except in long-tried society. Yet she had not been without some good examples of what must have been ready conversation, in more extensive circles. Besides that a great part of her youth had been passed in the residences of her superior relatives, she had the advantage of being much loved, when a

child, by the late Mr Bentley; to whom, on the establishment of the fabric known by the name of Wedgwood and Bentley's, was appropriated the superintendence of all that related to form and design. Mr Wedgwood was the intelligent man of commerce, and the able chemist; Mr Bentley the man of more general literature, and of taste in the arts. One of her mother's sisters was married to Mr Bentley; and during the life of her aunt, who was accomplished 'according to the moderation', — may I say the *wise* moderation? — of that day, the little niece was a favourite guest at Chelsea, and afterwards at Turnham Green, where Mr and Mrs Bentley resided. At their house she saw several persons of distinction for literature; and others who, without having been so distinguished, were beneficial objects of attention for their minds and their manners. Of the former class the late Mrs Montague, and once, I think, Mrs Piozzi; of the latter, Mrs Ord. The gentleman, called Athenian Stuart, was also a visitor there."

Thus respectably born and connected, Miss Ward at the age of 23, acquired the name which she made so famous, by marrying William Radcliffe, Esq. graduated at Oxford, and a student of law. He renounced the prosecution of his legal studies, and became afterwards proprietor and editor of the *English Chronicle*.

Thus connected, in a manner which must have induced her to cherish her literary powers, Mrs Radcliffe first came before the public as a novelist in 1789, only two years after her marriage, and when she was 24 years old. A Romance, entitled the *Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, which she then produced, gave but moderate intimation of the author's peculiar powers. The scene is laid in Scotland, during the dark ages, but without any attempt to trace either the peculiar manners or scenery of the country: and although, in reading the work with that express purpose, we can now trace some germs of that taste and talent for the wild, romantic, and mysterious, which the authoress afterwards employed with such effect, we cannot consider the work, on the whole, as by any means worthy of her pen. It is always, however, of consequence to the history of human genius to preserve its earlier efforts, that we may trace, if possible, how the oak at length germinates from the unmarked acorn.

Mrs Radcliffe's genius was more advantageously displayed in the *Sicilian Romance*, which appeared in 1790, and as we ourselves well recollect, attracted in no ordinary degree the attention of the public. This work displays the exuberance and fertility of imagination, which was the author's principal characteristic. Adventures

heaped on adventures, in quick and brilliant succession, with all the hair-breadth charms of escape or capture, hurry the reader along with them, and the imagery and scenery by which the action is relieved, are like those of a splendid oriental tale. Still this work had marked traces of the defects natural to an unpractised author. The scenes were inartificially connected, and the characters hastily sketched, without any attempt at individual distinctions; being cast in the usual mould of ardent lovers, tyrannical parents, with domestic ruffians, guards and others, who had wept or stormed through the chapters of romance without much alteration in their family habits or features, for a quarter of a century before Mrs Radcliffe's time. Nevertheless, the *Sicilian Romance* attracted much notice among the novel-readers of the day, as far excelling the ordinary meagreness of stale and uninteresting incident with which they were at that time regaled from the Leadenhall Press. Indeed, the praise may be claimed for Mrs Radcliffe, of having been the first to introduce into her prose fictions a tone of fanciful description and impressive narrative, which had hitherto been exclusively applied to poetry. Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, even Walpole, though writing upon an imaginative subject, are decidedly prose authors. Mrs Radcliffe has a title to

be considered as the first poetess of romantic fiction, that is, if actual rhythm shall not be deemed essential to poetry.

The *Romance of the Forest*, which appeared in 1791, placed the author at once in that rank and pre-eminence in her own particular style of composition, in which her works have ever since maintained her. Her fancy, in this new effort, was more regulated, and subjected to the fetters of a regular story. The persons, too, although perhaps there is nothing very original in the conception, were depicted with skill far superior to that which the author had hitherto displayed, and the work attracted the public attention in proportion. That of La Motte, indeed, is sketched with particular talent, and most part of the interest of the piece depends upon the vacillations of a character who, though upon the whole we may rather term him weak and vicious, than villainous, is, nevertheless, at every moment on the point of becoming an agent in atrocities which his heart disapproves of. He is the exact picture of «the needy man who has known better days," and who, spited at the world, from which he has been expelled with contempt, and condemned by circumstances to seek an asylum in a desolate castle full of mysteries and horrors, avenges himself, by playing the gloomy despot within his own family, and tyrannizing over

those who were subjected to him only by their strong sense of duty. A more powerful agent appears on the scene — obtains the mastery over this dark but irresolute spirit, and, by alternate exertion of seduction and terror, compels him to be his agent in schemes against the virtue, and even the life of an orphan, whom he was bound in gratitude, as well as in honour and hospitality, to cherish and protect.

The heroine, too, wearing the usual costume of innocence, purity, and simplicity, as proper to heroines as white gowns are to the sex in general, has some pleasing touches of originality. Her grateful affection for the La Motte family — her reliance on their truth and honour, when the wife had become unkind, and the father treacherous towards her, is an interesting and individual trait in her character.

But although, undoubtedly, the talents of Mrs Radcliffe, in the important point of drawing and finishing the characters of her narrative, were greatly improved since her earlier attempts, and manifested sufficient power to raise her far above the common crowd of novelists, this was not the department of art on which her popularity rested. The public were chiefly aroused, or rather fascinated, by the wonderful conduct of a story, in which the author so successfully called out the feelings of mystery and of awe,

while chapter after chapter, and incident after incident, maintained the thrilling attraction of awakened curiosity and suspended interest. Of these, every reader felt the force, from the sage in his study, to the group which assembles around the evening taper, to seek a solace from the toils of ordinary life, by an excursion into the regions of imagination The tale was the more striking, because varied and relieved by descriptions of the ruined mansion, and the forest with which it is surrounded, under so many different points, now pleasing and serene, now gloomy, now terrible — scenes which could only have been drawn by one to whom nature had given the eye of a painter with the spirit of a poet.

In 1793, Mrs Radcliffe had the advantage of visiting the scenery of the Rhine, and, although we are not positive of the fact, we are strongly inclined to suppose that the *Mysteries of Udolpho* were written, or at least corrected, after the date of this journey; for the mouldering castles of the robber chivalry of Germany, situated on the wild and romantic banks of that celebrated stream, seem to have given a bolder flight to her imagination, and a more glowing character to her colouring, than are exhibited in the *Romance of the Forest.* The scenery on the Lakes of Westmoreland, which Mrs Radcliffe visited,

about the same time, was also highly calculated to awaken her fancy, as nature has in these wild but beautiful regions realized the descriptions in which this authoress loved to indulge. Her remarks upon these countries were given to the public in 1794, in a very well written work, entitled, *a Journey through Holland*, etc.

Much was of course expected from Mrs Radcliffe's next effort, and the booksellers felt themselves authorized in offering what was then considered as an unprecedented sum, 500*l.* for *The Mysteries of Udolpho.* It often happens, that a writer's previous reputation proves the greatest enemy which, in a second attempt upon public favour, he has to encounter. Exaggerated expectations are excited and circulated, and criticism, which had been seduced into former approbation by the pleasure of surprise, now stands awakened and alert, to pounce upon every failing. Mrs Radcliffe's popularity, however, stood the test, and was heightened rather than diminished by *The Mysteries of Udolpho.* The very name was fascinating, and the public, who rushed upon it with all the eagerness of curiosity, rose from it with unsated appetite. When a family was numerous, the volumes flew, and were sometimes torn from hand to hand, and the complaints of those whose studies were thus interrupted, were a general tribute to the genius

of the author. One might still be found of a different and higher description, in the dwelling of the lonely invalid, or neglected votary of celibacy, who was bewitched away from a sense of solitude, of indisposition, of the neglect of the world, or of secret sorrow, by the potent charm of this mighty enchantress. Perhaps the perusal of such works may, without injustice, be compared with the use of opiates, baneful, when habitually and constantly resorted to, but of most blessed power in those moments of pain and of languor, when the whole head is sore, and the whole heart sick. If those who rail indiscriminately at this species of composition, were to consider the quantity of actual pleasure which it produces, and the much greater proportion of real sorrow and distress which it alleviates, their philanthropy ought to moderate their critical pride, or religious intolerance.

To return to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The author, pursuing her own favourite bent of composition, and again waving her wand over the world of wonder and imagination, had judiciously used a spell of broader and more potent command. The situation and distresses of the heroines, have here, and in *The Romance of the Forest*, a general aspect of similarity. Both are divided from the object of their attachment by the gloomy influence of unfaithful and op-

pressive guardians, and both become inhabitants of time-stricken towers, and witnesses of scenes now bordering on the supernatural, and now upon the horrible. But this general resemblance is only such as we love to recognize in pictures which have been painted by the same hand, and as companions for each other. Every thing in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is on a larger and more sublime scale than in *The Romance of the Forest;* the interest is of a more agitating and tremendous nature; the scenery of a wilder and more terrific description; the characters distinguished by fiercer and more gigantic features. Montoni, a desperado, and captain of Condottieri, stands beside La Motte and his Marquis like one of Milton's fiends beside a witch's familiar. Adeline is confined within a ruined manor-house, but her sister heroine, Emily, is imprisoned in a huge castle, like those of feudal times; the one is attacked and defended by bands of armed mercenary soldiers, the other only threatened by a visit from constables and thief-takers. The scale of the landscape is equally different: the quiet and limited woodland scenery of the one work forming a contrast with the splendid and high-wrought descriptions of Italian mountain-grandenr which occur in the other.

In general, *The Misteries of Udolpho* was, at its first appearance, cousidered as a step beyond

Mrs Radcliffe's former work high as that had justly advanced her. We entertain the same opinion in again reading them both, even after some years interval. Yet there were persons of no mean judgment, to whom the simplicity of *The Romance of the Forest* seemed preferable to the more highly coloured and broader style of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; and it must remain matter of opinion, whether their preference be better founded than in the partialities of a first love, which in literature, as in life, are often unduly predominant. With the majority of the public, the superior magnificence of landscape, and dignity of conception of character, secured the palm for the more recent work.

The fifth production by which Mrs Radcliffe arrested the attention of the public, was fated to be her last. *The Italian*, which appeared in 1790, was purchased by the booksellers for 800*l*., and obtained a share of public favour equal to any of its predecessors. Here, too, the author had, with much judgment, taken such a difference, that while employing her own peculiar talent, and painting in the style of which she may be considered the inventor, she cannot be charged with repeating or copying herself. She selected the new and powerful machinery afforded her by the Popish religion, when established in its paramount superiority,

and thereby had at her disposal monks, spies, dungeons, the mute obedience of the bigot, the dark and denominating spirit of the crafty priest, — all the thunders of the Vatican, and all the terrors of the Inquisition. This fortunate adoption placed in the hands of the *authoress* a powerful set of agents, who were at once supplied with means and motives for bringing forward scenes of horror; and thus a tinge of probability was thrown over even those parts of the story which are most inconsistent with the ordinary train of human events.

Most writers of romance have been desirous to introduce their narrative to the reader, in some manner which might at once excite interest, and prepare his mind for the species of excitation which it was the author's object to produce. In *The Italian*, this has been achieved by Mrs Radcliffe with an uncommon degree of felicity, nor is there any part of the romance itself which is more striking than its impressive commencement.

A party of English travellers visit a Neapolitan church. «Within the shade of a portico, a person with folded arms, and eyes directed towards the ground, was pacing behind the pillars the whole extent of the pavement, and was apparently so engaged by his own thoughts, as not to observe that strangers were approaching.

He turned, however, suddenly, as if startled by the sound of steps, and then, without farther pausing, glided to a door that opened into the church, and disappeared.

«There was something too extraordinary in the figure of this man, and too singular in his conduct, to pass unnoticed by the visitors. He was of a tall thin figure, bending forward from the shoulders; of a sallow complexion, and harsh features, and had an eye which, as it looked up from the cloak that muffled the lower part of his countenance, was expressive of uncommon ferocity.

«The travellers, on entering the church, looked round for the stranger, who had passed thither before them, but he was nowhere to be seen; and, through all the shade of the long aisles, only one other person appeared. This was a friar of the adjoining convent, who sometimes pointed out to strangers the objects in the church which were most worthy of attention, and who now, with this design, approached the party that had just entered.

«When the party had viewed the different shrines, and whatever had been judged worthy of observation, and were returning through an obscure aisle towards the portico, they perceived the person who had appeared upon the steps, passing towards a confessional on the left, and,

as he entered it, one of the party pointed him out to the friar, and inquired who he was; the friar turning to look after him, did not immediately reply, but, on the question being repeated, he inclined his head, as in a kind of obeisance, and calmly replied, 'He is an assassin.'

«'An assassin!' exclaimed one of the Englishmen; 'an assassin and at liberty!'

«An Italian gentleman, who was of the the party, smiled at the astonishment of his friend.

«'He has sought sanctuary here,' replied the friar; 'within these walls he may not be hurt.'

«'Do your altars then protect a murderer!' said the Englishman.

«'He could find shelter no where else!' answered the friar meekly.

* * * * * *

«'But observe yonder confessional,' added the Italian, 'that beyond the pillars on the left of the aisle, below a painted window. Have you discovered it? The colours of the glass throw, instead of a light, a shade over that part of the church, which, perhaps, prevents your distinguishing what I mean!'

«The Englishman looked whither his friend pointed, and observed a confessional of oak, or some very dark wood, adjoining the wall,

and remarked also, that it was the same which the assassin had just entered; it consisted of three compartments, covered with a black canopy. In the central division was the chair of the confessor, elevated by several steps above the pavement of the church; and on either hand was a small closet or box, with steps leading up to a grated partition, at which the penitent might kneel, and, concealed from observation, pour into the ear of the confessor, the consciousness of crimes that lay heavy on his heart.

«'You observe it?» said the Italian.

«'I do,' replied the Englishman, 'it is the same which the assassin had passed into, and I think it one of the most gloomy spots I ever beheld; the view of it is enough to strike a criminal with despair!'

«'We, in Italy, are not so apt to despair,' replied the Italian smilingly.

«'Well, but what of this confessional?' inquired the Englishman. 'The assassin entered it.'

«'He has no relation with what I am about to mention,' said the Italian; «but I wish you to mark the place, because some very extraordinary circumstances belong to it.'

«'What are they?» said the Englishman.

«'It is now several years since the confession, which is connected with them, was made at that very confessional,' added the Italian; «the

view of it, and the sight of the assassin, with your surprise at the liberty which is allowed him, led me to a recollection of the story. When you return to the hotel, I will communicate it to you, if you have no pleasanter mode of engaging your time.'

* * * * * *

«'After I have taken another view of this solemn edifice,' replied the Englishman, 'and particularly of the confessional you have pointed to my notice.'

«While the Englishman glanced his eye over the high roofs, and along the solemn perspectives of the Santa del Pianto, he perceived the figure of the assassin stealing from the confessional across the choir, and shocked at again beholding him, he turned his eyes, and hastily quitted the church.

«The friends then separated, and the Englishman, soon after returning to his hotel, received the volume. He read as follows.»

This introductory passage, which, for the references which it bears to the story, and the anxious curiosity which it excites in the reader's mind, may be compared to the dark and vaulted gateway of an ancient castle, is followed by a tale of corresponding mystery and terror; in detailing which, the art of Mrs Radcliffe, who

was so great a mistress of throwing her narrative into mystery, affording half intimations of veiled and secret horrors, is used perhaps to the very uttermost. And yet, though our reason ultimately presents us with this criticism, we believe she generally suspends her remonstrance till after the perusal; and it is not until the last page is read, and the last volume closed, that we feel ourselves disposed to censure that which has so keenly interested us. We become then at length aware, that there is no uncommon merit in the general contrivance of the story; that many of the incidents are improbable, and some of the mysteries left unexplained; yet the impression of general delight which we have received from the perusal, remains unabated, for it is founded on recollection of the powerful emotions of wonder, curiosity, even fear, to which we have been subjected during the currency of the narrative.

A youth of high birth and noble fortune becomes enamoured of a damsel of low fortunes, unknown race, and all that portion of beauty and talents which belongs to a heroine of romance. This union is opposed by his family, and chiefly by the pride of his mother, who calls to her aid the real hero of the tale, her confessor, Father Schedoni, a strongly drawn character as ever stalked through the regions of

romance, equally detestable for the crimes he has formerly perpetrated, and those which he is willing to commit; formidable from his talents and energy; at once a hypocrite and a profligate, unfeeling, unrelenting, and implacable. With the aid of this agent, Vivaldi, the lover, is thrown into the dungeons of the inquisition, while Ellena, his bride, is carried by the pitiless monk to an obscure den, where, finding the services of an associate likely to foil his expectation, he resolves to murder her with his own hand. Hitherto the story, or, at least, the situation, is not altogether dissimilar from *The Misteries of Udolpho*; but the fine scene, where the monk, in the act of raising his arm to murder his sleeping victim, discovers her to be his own child, is of a new, grand, and powerful character, and the horrors of the wretch, who, on the brink of murder, has but just escaped from committing a crime of yet more exaggerated horror, constitute the strongest painting which has been under Mrs Radcliffe's pencil, and are well fitted to be actually embodied on canvass by some great master. In the prisons of the Inquisition, the terrific Schedoni is met, counterplotted, and at length convicted, by the agency of a being as wicked as himself, who had once enjoyed his confidence. Several of these pauses of breathless suspense are thrown

in, during the detail of these intrigues, by which Mrs Radcliffe knew so well how to give interest to the work.

On reconsidering the narrative, we indeed discover that many of the incidents are imperfectly explained, and that we can distinguish points upon which the authoress had doubtless intended to lay the foundation of something which she afterwards forgot or omitted. Of the first class, is the astonishment testified by the grand inquisitor with such striking effect, when a strange voice was heard, even in the awful presence of that stern tribunal, to assume the task of interrogation proper to its judges. The incident in itself is most impressive. As Vivaldi is blindfolded, and bound upon the rack, the voice of a mysterious agent, who had repeatedly crossed his path, and always eluded his search, is heard to mingle in his examination, and strikes the whole assembly with consternation. «'Who is come amongst us?' he (the grand inquisitor) repeated, in a louder tone. Still no answer was returned; but again a confused murmur sounded from the tribunal, and a general consternation seemed to prevail. No person spoke with sufficient preeminence to be understood by Vivaldi; something extraordinary appeared to be passing, and he awaited the issue with all the patience he could command. Soon after he

heard the doors opened, and the noise of persons quitting the chamber. A deep silence followed; but he was certain that the familiars were still beside him, waiting to begin their work of torture." This is all unquestionably very impressive; but no other explanation of the intruder's character is given, than that he is an officer of the Inquisition; a circumstance which may explain his being present at Vivaldi's examination, but by no means his interference with it, against the pleasure of the grand inquisitor. The latter certainly would neither have been surprised at the presence of one of his own officials nor overawed by his deportment; since the one was a point of ordinary duty, and the other must have been accounted as an impertinence. It may be added also, that there is no full or satisfactory reason assigned for the fell and unpitying hostility of Zampari to Schedoni, and that the reasons which can be gathered are inadequate and trivial.

We may notice an instance of even greater negligence, in the passages respecting the ruined palace of the Barone de Cambrusca, where the imperfect tale of horror hinted at by a peasant, the guide of Schedoni, appears to jar upon the galled conscience of the monk, and induces the reader to expect a train of important consequences. Unquestionably, the ingenious au-

thoress had meant this half-told tale to correspond with some particulars in the proposed developement of the story, which having been finished more hastily, or in a different manner from what she intended, she had, like a careless knitter, neglected to take up her « loose stitches. » It is, however, a baulking of the reader's imagination, which authors in this department would do well to guard against. At tke same time, critics are bound in mercy to remember, how much more easy it is to draw a complicate chain of interest, than to disentangle it with perfect felicity. Dryden, it is said, used to curse the inventors of fifth acts in the drama, and romance writers owe no blessings to the memory of him who devised explanatory chapters.

We have been told, that in this beautiful romance, the customs and rules of the Inquisition have been violated; a charge more easily made than proved, and which, if true, is of minor importance, because its code is happily but little known to us. It is matter of more obvious criticism, and therefore a greater error, that the scraps of Italian language introduced to give locality to the scene, are not happily chosen, and savour of affectation. But if Mrs Radcliffe did not intimately understand the language and manners of Italy, the following extract may prove how well she knew how to

paint Italian scenery, which she could only have seen in the pictures of Claude or Poussin.

«These excursions sometimes led to Puzzuoli, Baia, or the woody cliffs of Pausilippo; and as, on their return, they glided along the moon-light bay, the melodies of Italian strains seemed to give enchantment to the scenery of its shore. At this cool hour the voices of the vine-dressers were frequently heard in trio, as they reposed, after the labour of the day, on some pleasant promontory, under the shade of poplars; or the brisk music of the dance from fishermen, on the margin of the waves below. The boatmen rested on their oars, while their company listened to voices modulated by sensibility to finer eloquence, than it is in the power of art alone to display; and at others, while they observed the airy natural grace, which distinguishes the dance of the fishermen and peasant girls of Naples. Frequently, as they glided round a promontory, whose shaggy masses impended far over the sea, such magic scenes of beauty unfolded, adorned by these dancing groups on the bay beyond, as no pencil could do justice to. The deep clear waters reflected every image of the landscape; the cliffs, branching into wild forms, crowned with groves, whose rough foliage often spread down their steeps in picturesque luxuriance; the ruined villa, on some bold

point, peeping through the trees; peasants' cabins hanging on the precipices, and the dancing figures on the strand — all touched with the silvery tint and soft shadows of moonlight. On the other hand, the sea, trembling with a long line of radiance and showing in the clear distance the sails of vessels stealing in every direction along its surface, presented a prospect as grand as the landscape was beautiful." There are other descriptive passages which, like those in *The Misteries of Udolpho*, approach more nearly to the style of Salvator Rosa.

The Italian was received with as much ardour as Mrs Radcliffe's two previous novels and it was from no coldness on the part of the public, that, like an actress in full possession of applauded powers, she chose to retreat from the stage in the blaze of her fame. After the publication of *The Italian*, in 1797, the public were not favoured with any more of Mrs Radcliffe's publications.

We are left in vain to conjecture the reasons, which, for more than twenty years, condemned an imagination so fertile, so far as the public were concerned, to sterility. The voice of unfriendly criticism, always as sure an attendant upon merit as envy herself, may perhaps have intimidated the gentleness of her character, or Mrs Radcliffe, as frequently happens, may have

been disgusted at seeing the mode of composition, which she had brought into fashion, profaned by the host of servile imitators, who could only copy and render more prominent her defects, without aspiring to her merits. But so steadily did she keep her resolution, that for more than twenty years the name of Mrs Radcliffe was never mentioned, unless with reference to her former productions, and in general (so retired was the current of her life) there was a belief that Fate had removed her from the scene.

Notwithstanding her refraining from publication, it is impossible to believe that an imagination so strong, supported by such ready powers of expression, should have remained inactive during so long a period; but the manuscripts on which she was occasionally employed have as yet been withheld from the public. We have some reason to believe, that arrangements were at one time almost concluded between Mrs Radcliffe and a highly respectable publishing house, respecting a poetical romance, but were broken off in consequence of the author changing or delaying her intention of publication. It is to be hoped, that the world will not be ultimately deprived of what undoubtedly must be the source of much pleasure whenever it shall see the light.

The tenor of Mrs Radcliffe's private life seems to have been peculiarly calm and sequestered.

She probably declined the sort of personal notoriety, which, in London society, usually attaches to persons of literary merit; and perhaps no author, whose works were so universally read and admired, was so little personally known, even to the most active of that class of people of distinction, who rest their peculiar pretensions to fashion upon the selection of literary society. Her estate was certainly not the less gracious; and it did not disturb Mrs Radcliffe's domestic comforts, although many of her admirers believed, and some are not yet undeceived, that, in consequence of brooding over the terrors which she depicted, her reason had at length been overturned, and that the author of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* only existed as the melancholy inmate of a private mad-house. This report was so generally spread, and so confidently repeated in print, as well as in conversation, that the editor believed it for several years, until, greatly to his satisfaction, he learned, from good authority, that there neither was, nor ever had been, the most distant foundation for this unpleasing rumour.

A false report of another kind gave Mrs Radcliffe much concern. In Miss Seward's Correspondence, among the literary gossip of the day, it is roundly stated, that the *Plays upon the Passions* were Mrs Radcliffe's, and that she owned

them. Mrs Radcliffe was much hurt at being reported capable of borrowing from the fame of a gifted sister; and the late Miss Seward would probably have suffered equally, had she been aware of the pain she inflicted by giving currency to a rumour so totally unfounded. The truth is, that, residing at a distance from the metropolis, and living upon literary intelligence as her daily food, Miss Seward was sometimes imposed upon by those friendly caterers, who were more anxious to supply her with the newest intelligence, than solicitous about its accuracy.

During the last twelve years of her life, Mrs Radcliffe suffered from a spasmodic asthma, which considerably affected her general health and spirits. This chronic disorder took a more fatal turn upon the 9th of January, 1822, and upon the 7th of February following, terminated the life of this ingenious and amiable lady, at her own house in London.

Mrs Radcliffe, as an author, has the most decided claim to take her place among the favoured few, who have been distinguished as the founders of a class, or school. She led the way in a peculiar style of composition, affecting powerfully the mind of the reader, which has

since been attempted by many, but in which no one has attained or approached the excellencies of the original inventor, unless, perhaps, the author of *The Family of Montorio*.

The species of romance which Mrs Radcliffe introduced bears nearly the same relation to the novel that the modern anomaly entitled a melodrame does to the proper drama. It does not appeal to the judgment by deep delineations of human feeling, or stir the passions by scenes of deep pathos, or awaken the fancy by tracing out, with spirit and vivacity, the lighter traces of life and manners, or excite mirth by strong representations of the ludicrous or humourous. In other words, it attains its interest neither by the path of tragedy nor of comedy; and yet it has, notwithstanding, a deep, decided, and powerful effect, gained by means independent of both — by an appeal, in one word, to the passion of fear, whether excited by natural dangers, or by the suggestions of superstition. The force therefore, of the production, lies in the delineation of external incident, while the characters of the agents, like the figures in many landscapes, are entirely subordinate to the scenes in which they are placed; and are only distinguished by such outlines as make them seem appropriate to the rocks and trees, which have been the artist's principal objects. The persons in-

troduced, — and here also the correspondence holds betwixt the melo-drame and such romances as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, — bear the features, not of individuals, but of the class to which they belong. A dark and tyrannical count; an aged crone of a house-keeper, the depositary of many a family legend; a garrulous waiting-maid; a gay and light-hearted valet; a villain or two of allwork; and a heroine, fulfilled with all perfections, and subjected to all manner of hazards, from the stock in trade of a romancer or a melo-dramatist; and if these personages be dressed in the proper costume, and converse in language sufficiently appropriate to their stations and qualities, it is not expected that the audience shall shake their sides at the humour of the dialogue, or weep over its pathos.

On the other hand, it is necessary that these characters, though not delineated with individual features, should be truly and forcibly sketched in the outline; that their dress and general appearance should correspond with and support the trick of the scene; and that their language and demeanour should either enhance the terrors amongst which they move, or form, as the action may demand, a strong and vivid contrast to them. Mrs Radcliffe's powers of fancy were particularly happy in depicting such personages, in throwing upon them and their actions just

enough of that dubious light which mystery requires, and in supplying them with language and manners which correspond with their situation and business upon the scene. We may take, as an example, the admirable description of the monk Schedoni. — «His figure was striking, but not so from grace; it was tall, and though extremely thin, his limbs were large and uncouth, and as he stalked along, wrapt in the black garments of his order, there was something terrible in its air; something almost superhuman. His cowl, too, as it threw a shade over the livid paleness of his face, increased its severe character, and gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror. His was not the melancholy of a sensible and wounded heart, but apparently that of a gloomy and ferocious disposition. There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that cannot easily be defined. It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated. An habitual gloom and severity prevailed over the deep lines of his countenance; and his eyes were so piercing, that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts; few persons could support their scrutiny, or even endure to meet them twice. Yet notwithstanding all this gloom

and austerity, some rare occasions of interest had called forth a character upon his countenance entirely different; and he could adapt himself to the tempers and passions of persons whom he wished to conciliate with astonishing facility, and generally with complete triumph. This monk, this Schedoni, was the confessor and secret adviser of the Marchesa di Vivaldi."

To draw such portraits as Schedoni's, and others which occur in Mrs Radcliffe's novels, requires no mean powers; and although they belong rather to romance than to real life, the impression which they make upon the imagination is scarce lessened by the sense, that they are in some sort as fabulous as fairies or ogres. But when the public have been surprised into an universally burst of applause, it is their custom to indemnify themselves by a corresponding degree of censure; just as children, when tired of admiring a new plaything, find a fresh and distinct pleasure in breaking it to pieces. Mrs Radcliffe, who had afforded such general delight to the public, was not doomed to escape the common fate; and the criticism with which she was assailed was the more invidious, that it was inflicted, in more than one case, by persons of genius, who followed the same pursuit with herself. It was the cry, at the period, and has sometimes been repeated since, that

the romances of Mrs Radcliffe, and the applause with which they were received, were evil signs of the times, and argued a great and increasing degradation of the public taste, which, instead of banqueting as heretofore upon scenes of passion, like those of Richardson, or of life and manners, as in the pages of Smollett and Fielding, was now coming back to the fare of the nursery, and gorged upon the wild and improbable fictions of an overheated imagination.

But this criticism, when justly examined, will be found to rest chiefly on that depreciating spirit, which would undermine the fair fame of an accomplished writer, by showing that she does not possess the excellencies proper to a style of composition totally different from that which she has attempted. The question is neither, whether the romances of Mrs Radcliffe possess merits which her plan did not require, nay, almost excluded; nor whether hers is to be considered as a department of fictitious composition, equal in dignity and importance to those where the great ancient master have long preoccupied the ground. The real and only point is, whether, considered as a separate and distinct species of writing, that introduced by Mrs Radcliffe possesses merit, and affords pleasure; for, these premises being admitted, it is as unreasonable to complain of the absence of advantages foreign

to her style and plan, and proper to those of another mode of composition, as to regret that the peach-tree does not produce grapes, or the vine peaches. A glance upon the face of nature is, perhaps, the best cure for this unjust and unworthy system of criticism. We there behold, that not only each star differs from another in glory, but that there is spread over the face of nature a boundless variety; and that as a thousand different kinds of shrubs and flowers not only have beauties independent of each other, but are more delightful from that very circumstance than if they were uniform, so the fields of literature admit the same variety; and it may be said of the Muse of fiction, as well as of her sisters,

Mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet.

It may be stated, to the additional confusion of such hypercritics as we allude to, that not only does the infinite variety of human tastes require different styles of composition for their gatification; but if there were to be selected one particular structure of fiction, which possesses charms for the learned and unlearned, the grave and gay, the gentleman and the clown, it would be perhaps that of those very romances which the severity of their criticism seeks to depreciate.

There are many men too mercurial to be delighted by Richardson's beautiful, but protracted display of the passions; and there are some too dull to comprehend the wit of Le Sage, or too saturnine to relish the nature and spirit of Fielding: and yet these very individuals will with difficulty be divorced from the *Romance of the Forest*, or, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; for curiosity and a lurking love of mystery, together with a germ of superstition, are more general ingredients in the human mind, and more widely diffused through the mass of humanity, than either taste or feeling. The unknown author of the *Pursuits of Literature*, who, in respect to common tales of terror,

«Boasts an English heart,
Unused at ghosts or rattling bones to start.»

acknowledges, nevertheless, the legitimate character of Mrs Radcliffe's art, and pays no mean tribute to her skill. Of some sister novelists he talks with slight regard. «Though all of them are ingenious ladies, yet they are too frequently whining and frisking in novels, till our girl's heads turn wild with impossible adventures; and now and then are tainted with democracy. Not so the mighty magician of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, bred and nourished by the Floren-

tine muses in their sacred solitary caverns, amid the paler shrines of gothic superstition, and in all the dreariness of enchantment; a poetess whom Ariosto would with rapture have acknowledged, as

——— «La nudrita
Damigella Trivulzia al sacro speco.'» — O.
F. c. 46.

Mrs Radcliffe was not made acquainted with this high compliment till long after the satire was published, and its value was enhanced by the author's general severity of judgment, and by his perfect acquaintance with the manners and language of Italy, in which she had laid her scene.

It is farther to be observed, that the same class of critics who ridiculed these romances as unnatural and improbable, were disposed to detract from the genius of the author, on account of the supposed facility of her task. Art or talent, they said, was not required to produce that sort of interest and emotion, which is perhaps, after all, more strongly excited by a vulgar legend of a ghost than by the high painting and laboured descriptions of Mrs Radcliffe. But this criticism is not much better founded than the former. The feelings of suspense and awful

attention which she excited, were by means of springs which lie open indeed to the first touch, but which are peculiarly liable to be worn out by repeated pressure. The public soon, like Macbeth, became satiated with horrors, and indifferent to the strongest *stimuli* of that kind. It shows, therefore, the excellence and power of Mrs Radcliffe's genius, that she was able three times to bring back her readers with fresh appetite to a banquet of the same description; while of her numerous imitators, who rang the changes upon old castles and forests, and «antres dire,» scarcely one attracted attention, until Mr. Lewis published his *Monk*, several years after she had resigned her pen.

The materials of these celebrated romances, and the means employed in conducting the narrative, are all selected with a view to the author's primary object, of moving the reader by ideas of impending danger, hidden guilt, supernatural visitings, — by all that is terrible, in short, combined with much that is wonderful. For this purpose, her scenery is generally as gloomy as her tale, and her personages are those at whose frown that gloom grows darker. She has uniformly selected the south of Europe for her place of action, whose passions, like the weeds of the climate, are supposed to attain portentous growth under the fostering sun; which

abounds with ruined monuments of antiquity, as well as the more massive remnants of the middle ages, and where feudal tyranny and catholic superstition still continue to exercise their sway over the slave and bigot, and to indulge to the haughty lord, or more haughty priest, that sort of despotic power, the exercise of which seldom fails to deprave the heart, and disorder the judgment. These circumstances are skilfully selected, to give probability to events which could not, without great violation of truth, be represented as having taken place in England. Yet, even with the allowances which we make for foreign minds and manners, the unterminating succession of misfortunes which press upon the heroine, strikes us as unnatural. She is continually struggling with the tide of adversity, and hurried downwards by its torrent; and if any more gay description is occasionally introduced, it is only as a contrast, not a relief to the melancholy and gloomy tenor of the narrative.

In working upon the sensations of natural and superstitious fear, Mrs Radcliffe has made much use of obscurity and suspense, the most fertile source, perhaps, of sublime emotion; for there are few dangers that do not become familiar to the firm mind, if they are presented to consideration as certainties, and in all their open

and declared character, whilst, on the other hand, the bravest have shrunk from the dark and the doubtful. To break off the narrative, when it seemed at the point of becoming most interesting — to extinguish a lamp just when a parchment containing some hideous secret ought to have been read, to exhibit shadowy forms and half-heard sounds of woe, were resources which Mrs Radcliffe has employed with more effect than any other writer of romance. It must be confessed that, in order to bring about these situations, some art or contrivance, on the part of the author, is rather too visible. Her heroines voluntarily expose themselves to situations, which in nature a lonely female would certainly have avoided. They are too apt to choose the midnight hour for investigating the mysteries of a deserted chamber or secret passage, and generally are only supplied with an expiring lamp, when about to read the most interesting documents. The simplicity of the tale is thus somewhat injured — it is as if we witnessed a dressing up of the very phantom by which we are to be startled; and the imperfection, though redeemed by many beauties, did not escape the censure of criticism.

A principal characteristic of Mrs Radcliffe's romances is the rule which the author imposed upon herself, that all the circumstances of her

narrative, however mysterious, and apparently superhuman, were to be accounted for on natural principles, at the winding up of the story. It must be allowed, that this has not been done with uniform success, and that the author has been more successful in exciting interest and apprehensions, than in explaining the means she has made use of. Indeed, we have already noticed, as the torment of romance writers, those necessary evils, the concluding chapters, when they must unravel the skein of adventures which they have been so industrious to perplex, and account for all the incidents which they have been at so much pains to render unaccountable. Were these great magicians, who deal in the wonderful and fearful, permitted to dismiss their spectres as they raise them, amidst the shadowy and indistinct light so favourable to the exhibition of phantasmagoria, without compelling them into broad daylight, the task were comparatively easy, and the fine fragment of *Sir Bertrand* might have rivals in that department. But the modern author is not permitted to escape in that way. We are told of a formal old judge, before whom evidence was tendered of the ghost of a murdered person having declared to a witness, that the prisoner at the bar was guilty, who admitted the evidence of the spirit to be excellent, but denied his

right to be heard through the mouth of another, and ordered the spectre to be summoned into open court. The present public deal as rigidly, and compel an explanation from the story-teller; and he must either at once consider the knot as worthy of being severed by supernatural aid, and bring on the stage his actual fiend or ghost, or, like Mrs Radcliffe, refer to natural agency the whole materials of his story.

We have already, in some brief remarks on *The Castle of Otranto*, avowed some preference for the more simple mode of boldly avowing the use of supernatural machinery. Ghosts and witches, and the whole tenets of superstition having once, and at no late period, been matter of universal belief, warranted by legal authority, it would seem no great stretch upon the reader's credulity to require him, while reading of what his ancestors did, to credit for the time what those ancestors devoutly believed in. And yet, notwithstanding the success of Walpole and Maturin, (to whom we may add the author of *Forman*,) the management of such machinery must be acknowledged a task of a most delicate nature. «There is but one step," said Buonaparte, «betwixt the sublime and the «ridiculous;" and in an age of universal incredulity, we must own it would require, at the present day, the support of the highest powers,

to save the supernatural from slipping into the ludicrous. The *incredulus odi* is a formidable objection.

There are some modern authors, indeed, who have endeavoured, ingeniously enough, to compound betwixt ancient faith and modern incredulity. They have exhibited phantoms, and narrated prophecies strangely accomplished, without giving a defined or absolute opinion, whether these are to be referred to supernatural agency, or whether the apparitions were produced (no uncommon case) by an overheated imagination, and the accompanying presages by a casual, though singular, coincidence of circumstances. This is, however, an evasion of the difficulty, not a solution; and besides, it would be leading us too far from the present subject, to consider to what point the author of a fictitious narrative is bound by his charter to gratify the curiosity of the public, and whether, as a painter of actual life, he is not entitled to leave something in shade, when the natural course of events conceals so many incidents in total darkness. Perhaps, npon the whole, this is the most artful mode of terminating such a tale of wonder, as it forms the means of compounding with the taste of two different classes of readers; those who, like children, demand that each particular circumstance and incident of the narrative shall

be fully accounted for; and the more imaginative class, who, resembling men that walk for pleasure through a moonlight landscape, are more teased than edified by the intrusive minuteness with which some well-meaning companion disturbs their reveries, divesting stock and stone of the shadowy semblances in which fancy had dressed them, and pertinaciously restoring to them the ordinary forms and commonplace meanness of reality.

It may indeed be claimed as meritorious in Mrs Radcliffe's mode of expounding her mysteries, that it is founded in possibilities. Many situations have occurred, highly tinctured with romantic incident and feeling, the mysterious obscurity of which has afterwards been explained by deception and confederacy. Such have been the impostures of superstition in all ages, and such delusions were also practised by the members of the Secret Tribunal, in the middle ages, and in more modern times by the Rosicrucians and Illuminati, upon whose machinations Schiller has founded the fine romance of *The Ghost-Seer*. But Mrs Radcliffe has not had recourse to so artificial a solution. Her heroines often sustain the agony of fear, and her readers that of suspense, from incidents which, when explained, appear of an ordinary and trivial nature; and in this we do not greatly applaud her

art. A stealthy step behind the arras may, doubtless, in some situations, and when the nerves are tuned to a certain pitch, have no small influence upon the imagination; but if the conscious listener discovers it to be only the noise made by the cat, the solemnity of the feeling is gone, and the visionary is at once angry with his senses for having been cheated, and with his reason for having acquiesced in the deception. We fear that some such feeling of disappointment and displeasure attends most readers, when they read for the first time the unsatisfactory solution of the mysteries of the black pall and the wax figure, which has been adjourned from chapter to chapter, like something suppressed, because too horrible for the ear.

There is a separate inconvenience attending a narrative where the imagination has been kept in suspense, and is at length imperfectly gratified by an explanation falling short of what the reader has expected; for, in such a case, the interest terminates on the first reading of the volumes, and cannot, so far as it rests upon a high degree of excitation, be recalled upon a second perusal. Mrs Radcliffe's plan of narrative, happily complicated and ingeniously resolved, continues to please after many readings; for, although the interest of eager curiosity is no more, it is supplied by the rational pleasure,

which admires the author's art, and traces a thousand minute passages, which render the catastrophe probable, yet escape notice in the eagerness of a first perusal. But it is otherwise when some inadequate cause is assigned for a strong emotion; the reader feels tricked, and like a child who has once seen the scenes of a theatre too nearly, the idea of pasteboard, cords, and pullies, destroys for ever the illusion with which they were first seen from the proper point of view. Such are the difficulties and dilemmas which attend the path of the professed storyteller, who, while it is expected of him that his narrative should be interesting and extraordinary, is neither permitted to explain its wonders, by referring them to ordinary causes, on account of their triteness, nor to supernatural agency, because of its incredibility. It is no wonder that, hemmed in by rules so strict, Mrs Radcliffe, a mistress of the art of exciting curiosity, has not been uniformly fortunate in the mode of gratifying it.

The best and most admirable specimen of her art is the mysterious disappearance of Ludovico, after having undertaken to watch for a night in a haunted apartment; and the mind of the reader is finely wound up for some strange catastrophe, by the admirable ghost story which he is represented as perusing to amuse his solitude, as the

scene closes upon him. Neither can it be denied, that the explanation afforded of his mysterious incident is as probable as romance requires, and in itself completely satisfactory. As this is perhaps the most favourable example of Mrs Radcliffe's peculiar skill in composition, the incidents of the black veil and the waxen figure may be considered as instances where the explanation falls short of expectation, and disappoints the reader entirely. On the other hand, her art is at once, according to the classical precept, exerted and concealed in the beautiful and impressive passage, where the Marchesa is in the choir of the convent of San Nicolo, contriving with the atrocious Schedoni the murder of Ellena.

«'Avoid violence, if that be possible,' she added, immediately comprehending him, 'but let her die quickly! The punishment is due to the crime.'

«The Marchesa happened, as she said this, to cast her eyes upon the inscription over a confessional, where appeared, in black letters, these awful words, 'God *hears thee!*' It appeared an awful warning; her countenance changed; it had struck upon her heart. Schedoni was too much engaged by his own thoughts to observe or understand her silence. She soon recovered herself; and, considering that this was a common

inscription for confessionals, disregarded what she had at first considered as a peculiar admonition; yet some moments elapsed before she could renew the subject.

«'You were speaking of a place, father,' resumed the Marchesa — 'you mentioned a ——'

«'Ay,' muttered the confessor, still musing, — 'in a chamber of that house there is ——'

«'What noise is that?« said the Marchesa, interrupting him. They listened. A few low and querulous notes of the organ sounded at a distance, and stopped again.

«'What mournful music is that?' said the Marchesa, in a faultering voice; 'it was touched by a fearful hand! Vespers were over long ago?'

«'Daughter,' said Schedoni, somewhat sternly, 'you said you had a man's courage. Alas! you have a woman's heart.'

«' Excuse me, father; I know not why I feel this agitation, but I will command it. — That chamber?'

«'In that chamber,' resumed the confessor, 'is a secret door, constructed long ago.'

«'And for what purpose constructed?' said the fearful Marchesa.

«' Pardon me, daughter; 'tis sufficient that it is there; we will make a good use of it.

Through that door — in the night — when she sleeps —'

«'I comprehend you,' said the Marchesa, 'I comprehend you! But why, — you have your reasons no doubt, — but why the necessity of a secret door in a house which you say is so lonely — inhabited by only one person?'

«'A passage leads to the sea,' continued Schedoni, without replying to the question. 'There on the shore, when darkness covers it; there, plunged amidst the waves, no stain shall hint of ——'

«'Hark!' interrupted the Marchesa, starting, 'that note again!'

«The organ sounded faintly from the choir, and paused, as before. In the next moment, a slow chanting of voices was heard, mingling with the rising peal, in a strain particularly melancholy and solemn.

«'Who is dead?' said the Marchesa, changing countenance; 'it is a requiem!'

«'Peace be with the departed!' exclaimed Schedoni, and crossed himself; 'peace rest with his soul!'

«'Hark! to that chaunt,' said the Marchesa, in a trembling voice; 'it is a first requiem, the soul has but just quitted the body!'

«They listened in silence. The Marchesa was

much affected; her complexion varied at every instant; her breathings were short and interrupted, and she even shed a few tears, but they were those of despair rather than of sorrow."

Mrs Radcliffe's powers, both of language and description, have been justly estimated very highly. They hear, at the same time, considerable marks of that warm and somewhat exuberant imagination which dictated her works. Some artists are distinguished by precision and correctness of outline, others by the force and vividness of their colouring; and it is to the latter class that this author belongs. The landscapes of Mrs Radcliffe are far from equal in accuracy and truth to those of her contemporary, Mrs Charlotte Smith, whose sketches are so very graphical, that an artist would find little difficulty in actually painting from them. Those of Mrs Radcliffe, on the contrary, while they would supply the most noble and vigourous ideas, for producing a general effect, would leave the task of tracing a distinct and accurate outline to the imagination of the painter. As her story is usually enveloped in mystery, so there is, as it were, a haze over her landscapes, softening indeed the whole, and adding interest and dignity to particular parts, and thereby producing every effect which the author desired, but without communicating any absolutely precise or individual

image to the reader. The beautiful description of the Castle of Udolpho, upon Emily's first approach to it, is of this character. It affords a noble subject for the pencil; but were six artists to attempt to embody it, upon canvass, they would probably produce six drawings entirely dissimilar to each other, all of them equally authorized by the printed description, which, although a long one, is so beautiful a specimen of Mrs Radcliffe's peculiar talents, that we do not hesitate to insert it.

«Towards the close of day, the road wound into a deep valley Mountains, whose shaggy steeps appeared to be inaccessible, almost surrounded it. To the east, a vista opened, and exhibited the Apennines in their darkest horrors; and the long perspective of retiring summits rising over each other, their ridges clothed with pines, exhibited a stronger image of grandeur, than any that Emily had yet seen. The sun had just sunk below the top of the mountains she was descending, whose long shadow stretched athwart the valley; but his sloping rays, shooting through an opening of the cliffs, touched with a yellow gleam the summits of the forest that hung upon the opposite steeps, and streamed in full splendour upon the towers and battlements of a castle that spread its extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice above. The splendour of these

illumined objects was heightened by the contrasted shade which involved the valley below.

«'There,' said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, 'is Udolpho.'

«Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.

«The extent and darkness of these tall woods awakened terrific images in her mind, and she almost expected to see banditti start up from

under the trees. At length the carriages emerged upon a heathy rock, and soon after reached the castle gates, where the deep tone of the portal bell, which was struck upon to give notice of their arrival, increased the fearful emotions that had assailed Emily. While they waited till the servant within should come to open the gates, she anxiously surveyed the edifice; but the gloom that overspread it, allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline, with the massy walls of the ramparts, and to know that it was vast, ancient, and dreary. From the parts she saw, she judged of the heavy strength and extent of the whole. The gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size, and was defended by two round towers, crowned by overhanging turrets, embattled, where, instead of banners, now waved long grass and wild plants, that had taken root amongst the mouldering stones; and which seemed to sigh, as the breeze rolled past, over the desolation around them. The towers were united by a curtain, pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of a huge portcullis, surmounting the gates. From these, the walls of the ramparts extended to other towers, overlooking the precipice, whose shattered outline, appearing on a gleam that lingered in the

west, told of the ravages of war. — Beyond these, all was lost in the obscurity of evening."

We think it interesting to compare this splendid and beautiful fancy-picture with the precision displayed by the same author's pencil, when she was actually engaged in copying nature, and probably the reader will be of opinion, that *Udolpho* is a beautiful effect piece, *Hardwick* a striking and faithful portrait.

«Northward, beyond London, we may make one stop, after a country, not otherwise necessary to be noticed, to mention Hardwick, in Derbyshire, a seat of the Duke of Devonshire, once the residence of the Earl of Shrewsbury, to whom Elizabeth deputed the custody of the unfortunate Mary. It stands on an easy height, a few miles to the left of the road from Mansfield to Chesterfield, and is approached through shady lanes, which conceal the view of it, till you are on the confines of the park. Three towers of hoary grey then rise with great majesty among old woods, and their summits appear to be convered with the lightly shivered fragments of battlements, which, however, are soon discovered to be perfectly carved open work, in which the letters E. S. frequently occur under a coronet, the initials, and the memorials of the vanity, of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, who built the present edifice. Its tall features,

of a most picturesque tint, were finely disclosed between the luxuriant woods, and over the lawns of the park, which, every now and then, let in a glimpse of the Derbyshire hills. The scenery reminded us of the exquisite descriptions of Harewood.

«The deep embowering shades that veil Elfrida, and those of Hardwick, once veiled a form as lovely as the ideal graces of the poet, and conspired to a fate more tragical than that which Harewood witnessed.

«In front of the great gates of the castle court, the ground, adorned by old oaks, suddenly sinks to a darkly shadowed glade, and the view opens over the vale of Scarsdale, bounded by the wild mountains of the Peak. Immediately to the left of the present residence, some ruined features of the ancient one, enwreathed with the rich drapery of ivy, give an interest to the scene, which the later but more historical structure heightens and prolongs. We followed, not without emotion, the walk which Mary had so often trodden, to the folding doors of the great hall, whose lofty grandeur, aided by silence, and seen under the influence of a lowering sky, suited the temper of the whole scene. The tall windows, which half subdue the light they admit, just allowed us to distinguish the large figures in the tapestry, above the oak wainscot-

ing, and showed a colonnade of oak supporting a gallery along the bottom of the hall, with a pair of gigantic elk's horns flourishing between the windows opposite to the entrance. The scene of Mary's arrival, and her feelings upon entering this solemn shade, came involuntarily to the mind; the noise of horses' feet, and many voices from the court; her proud, yet gentle and melancholy look, as, led by the Lord Keeper, she passed slowly up the hall; his somewhat obsequious, yet jealous and vigilant air, while, awed by her dignity and beauty, he remembers the terrors of his own queen; the silence and anxiety of her maids, and the bustle of the surrounding attendants.

«From the hall, a staircase ascends to the gallery of a small chapel, in which the chairs and cushions used by Mary still remain, and proceeds to the first story where only one apartment bears memorials of her imprisonment, the bed, tapestry, and chairs, having been worked by herself. This tapestry is richly embossed with emblematic figures, each with its title worked above it, and, having been scrupulously preserved, is still entire and fresh.

«Over the chimney of an adjoining dining-room, to which, as well as to other apartments on this floor, some modern furniture bas been added, is this motto carved in oak: —

'There is only this: to fear God, and keep his commandments.'

«So much less valuable was timber than workmanship, when this mansion was constructed, that, where the staircases are not of stone, they are formed of solid oaken steps, instead of planks; such is that from the second, or state story, to the roof, whence, on clear days, York and Lincoln cathedrals are said to be included in the extensive prospect. This second floor is that which gives its chief interest to the edifice. Nearly all the apartments of it were allotted to Mary; some of them for state purposes, and the furniture is known by other proof than its appearance, to remain as she left it. The chief room, or that of audience, is of uncommon loftiness, and strikes by its grandeur, before the veneration and tenderness arise, which its antiquities, and the plainly told tale of the sufferings they witnessed, excite »[1]

---

[1] Journey through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine. To which are added, Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland. By Ann Radcliffe. 4to. 1795. page 371.

The contrast of these two descriptions will satisfy the reader that Mrs Radcliffe knew as well how to copy nature, as when to indulge imagination. The towers of Udolpho are undefined, boundless, and wreathed in mist and obscurity; the ruins of Hardwick are as fully and boldly painted, but with more exactness of outline, and perhaps less warmth and magnificence of colouring.

It is singular that though Mrs Radcliffe's beautiful descriptions foreign scenery, composed solely from the materials afforded by travellers, collected and embodied by her own genius, were marked in a particular degree (to our thinking at least), with the characteristics of fancy-portraits; yet many of her contemporaries conceived them to be exact descriptions of scenes which she had visited in person. One report, transmitted to the public by the Edinburgh Review, stated, that Mr and Mrs Radcliffe had visited Italy; that Mr Radcliffe had been attached to one of the British embassies in that country; and that it was there his gifted consort imbibed the taste for picturesque scenery, for mouldering ruins, and for the obscure and gloomy anecdotes which tradition relates of their former inhabitants. This is so far a mistake, as Mrs Radcliffe was never in Italy; but we have already mentioned the probability of

her having availed herself of the acquaintance she formed in 1793 with the magnificent scenery on the banks of the Rhine, and the frowning remains of feudal castles with which it abounds. The inaccuracy of the reviewer is of no great consequence; but a more absurd report found its way into print, that Mrs Radcliffe, namely, having visited the fine old gothic mansion of Haddon House, had insisted upon remaining a night there, in the course of which she had been inspired with all that enthusiasm for gothic residences, hidden passages, and mouldering walls, which mark her writings. Mrs Radcliffe, we are assured, never saw Haddon House; and although it was a place excellently worth her attention, and could hardly have been seen by her without suggesting some of those ideas in which her imagination naturally revelled, yet we should suppose the mechanical aid to invention — the recipe for fine writing — the sleeping in a dismantled and unfurnished old house, was likely to be rewarded with nothing but a cold, and was an affectation of enthusiasm to which Mrs Radcliffe would have disdained to have recourse.

The warmth of imagination which Mrs Radcliffe manifests, was naturally connected with an inclination towards poetry, and accordingly songs, sonnets, and pieces of fugitive verse, amuse and relieve the reader in the course of

her volumes. These are not, in this place, the legitimate subject of criticism; but it may be remarked, that they display more liveliness and richness of fancy, than correctness of taste, or felicity of expression. The language does not become pliant in Mrs Radcliffe's hands; and, unconscious of this defect, she has attempted, nevertheless, to bend it into new structures of verse, for which the English is not adapted. The song of the Glow-worm is an experiment of this nature. It must also be allowed, that the imagination of the author sometimes carries her on too fast, and that if she herself formed a competent and perfect idea of what she meant to express, she has sometimes failed to convey it to the reader. At other times, her poetry partakes of the rich and beautiful colouring which distinguishes her prose composition, and has, perhaps, the same fault, of not being in every case quite precise in expressing the meaning of the author.

The following Address to Melancholy may be fairly selected as a specimen of her powers.

Spirit of love and sorrow — hail!
Thy solemn voice from far I hear,
Mingling with evening's dying gale:
Hail, with this sadly-pleasing tear!

O! at this still, this lonely hour,
  Thine own sweet hour of closing day,
Awake thy lute, whose charmful power
  Shall call up Fancy to obey;

To paint the wild romantic dream,
  That meets the poet's musing eye,
As on the bank of shadowy stream
  He breathes to her the fervid sigh.

O lonely spirit! let thy song
  Lead me thro' all thy sacred haunt;
The minister's moonlight aisles along,
  Where spectres raise the midnight chaunt!

I hear their dirges faintly swell!
  Then, sink at once in silence drear,
While, from the pillar'd cloister's cell,
  Dimly their gliding forms appear!

Lead where the pine-woods wave on high,
  Whose pathless sod is darkly seen,
As the cold moon, with trembling eye,
  Darts her long beams the leaves between.

Lead to the mountain's dusky head,
  Where, far below, in shades profound,
Wide forests, plains, and hamlets spread,
  And sad the chimes of vesper sound.

Or guide me where the dashing oar,
Just breaks the stillness of the vale,
As slow it tracks the winding shore,
To meet the ocean's distant sail:

To pebbly banks, that Neptune laves,
With measured surges, loud and deep,
Where the dark cliff bends o'er the waves,
And wild the winds of autumn sweep.

There pause at midnight's spectred hour,
And list the long resounding gale;
And catch the fleeting moonlight's power,
O'er foaming seas and distant sail.

It cannot, we think, be denied, that we have here beautiful ideas expressed in appropriate versification; yet here, as in her prose compositions, the poetess is too much busied with external objects, too anxious to describe the outward accompaniments of melancholy, to write upon the feeling itself; and although the comparison be made at the expense of a favourite authoress, we cannot help contrasting the poetry we have just inserted with a song, by Fletcher, on a similar subject.

PAS. (*Sings*).

Hence, all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly!
There's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see't
But only melancholy!

Welcome, folded arms, and fixed eyes,
A sigh that piercing mortifies,
A look that's fastened to the ground,
A tongue chained up, without a sound!
Fountain heads, and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves!
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly housed, save bats and owls!
A midnight bell, a parting groan!
These are the sounds we feed upon;
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley,
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

The Nice Valour.

In these last verses the reader may observe, that the human feeling of the votary of melancholy, or rather the pale passion itself, is predominant; that our thoughts are of, and with, the pensive wanderer; and that the «fountain heads, and pathless groves," like the landscape

in a portrait, are only secondary parts of the picture. In Mrs Radcliffe's verses, it is different. The accessaries and accompaniments of melancholy are well described, but they call for so much of our attention, that the feeling itself scarce solicits due regard. We are placed among melancholy objects, but if our sadness is reflected from them, it is not the growth of our own minds. Something like this may be observed in Mrs Radcliffe's romances, where our curiosity is too much interested about the evolution of the story, to permit our feelings to be acted upon by the distresses of the hero or heroine. We do not quite acknowledge them as objects of our interest personally, and, convinced that the authoress will extricate them from their embarrassments, we are more concerned about the course of the story, than the feelings or fate of those of whom it is told.

But we must not take farewell of a favourite author with a depreciating sentiment. It may be true that Mrs Radcliffe rather walks in fairy land than in the region of realities, and that she has neither displayed the command of the human passions, nor the insight into the human heart, nor the observation of life and manners, which recommend other authors in the same line. But she has taken the lead in a line of composition, appealing to those powerful and

general sources of interest, a latent sense of supernatural awe, and curiosity concerning whatever is hidden and mysterious; and if she has been ever nearly approached in this walk, which we should hesitate to affirm, it is at least certain, that she has never been excelled or even equalled.

RICHARDSON.

THE life of this excellent man and ingenious author has been written, with equal spirit and candour, by Mrs Barbauld, a name long dear to elegant literature, and is prefixed to her publication of the author's Correspondence, published by Phillips, in six volumes, in 1804. The leading circumstances of these simple annals are necessarily extracted from that performance, to which the present editor has no means of adding any thing of consequence.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON was born in Derbyshire, in the year 1689. His father was one of many sons, sprung from a family of middling note, which had been so far reduced, that the children were brought up to mechanical trades. His mother was also decently descended, but an orphan, left such in infancy, by the death

of her father and mother, cut off, within half an hour of each other, by the great pestilence, in 1663. Her name is not mentioned. His father was a joiner, and connected, by employment, with the unhappy Duke of Monmouth, after whose execution he retired to Shrewsbury, apprehensive, perhaps, of a fate similar to that of College, his brother in trade, and well known, in those times, by the title of the Protestant Joiner.

Having sustained severe losses in trade, the elder Richardson was unable to give his son Samuel more than a very ordinary education; and our author, who was to rise so high in one department of literature, was left unacquainted with any language excepting his own. Under all these disadvantages, and perhaps in some degree owing to their existence, young Richardson very early followed, with a singular bias, the course which was most likely to render his name immortal. We give his own words, for they cannot be amended: —

«I recollect that I was early noted for having invention. I was not fond of play as other boys; my school-fellows used to call me *Serious* and *Gravity*, and five of them particularly delighted to single me out, either for a walk, or at their father's houses, or at mine, to tell them stories, as they phrased it. Some I told them from my

reading, as true, others from my head, as mere invention, of which they would be most fond, and often were affected by them One of them particularly, I remember, was for putting me to write a history, as he called it, on the model of Tommy Pots. I now forget what it was, only that it was of a servant-man preferred by a young lady (for his goodness) to a lord, who was a libertine. All my stories carried with them, I am bold to say, a useful moral.»[1]

But young Richardson found a still more congenial body of listeners among the female sex. An old lady, indeed, seems to have resented an admonitory letter, in which the future teacher of morals contrasted her pretensions to religion with her habitual indulgence in slander and backbiting; but with the young and sentimental his reception was more gracious. «As a bashful, and not forward boy,» he says, «I was an early favourite with all the young women of taste and reading in the neighbourhood. Half a dozen of them, when met to work with their needles, used, when they got a book they liked, and thought I should, to borrow me to read to them; their mothers sometimes with them, and both mothers and daughters used to be pleased

---

[1] Life of Richardson, vol. i. pp. 36, 37.

with the observations they put me upon making. I was not more than thirteen, when three of these young women, unknown to each other, having an high opinion of my taciturnity, revealed to me their love secrets, in order to induce me to give them copies to write after, or correct, for answers to their lovers' letters; nor did any one of them ever know that I was the secretary to the others. I have been directed to chide, and even repulse, when an offence was either given or taken, at the very time that the heart of the chider or repulser was open before me, overflowing with esteem and affection, and the fair repulser dreading to be taken at her word, directing *this* word, or *that* expression to be softened or changed. One, highly gratified with her lover's fervour and vows of everlasting love, has said, when I have asked her direction, I cannot tell you what to write, but (her heart on her lips) you cannot write too kindly. All her fear was only, that she should incur slight for her kindness.»[1]

His father had nourished some ambitious views of dedicating young Richardson to the ministry, but as his circumstances denied him the means of giving him necessary education, Samuel was

---

[1] Life of Richardson, vol. i. pp. 39, 40.

destined to that profession most nearly connected with literature, and was bound apprentice to Mr John Wilde, of Stationers' Hall, in the year 1706. Industrious, as well as intelligent, regulated in his habits, and diverted by no headstrong passion from the strictest course of duty, Richardson made rapid progress in his employment as a printer.

«I served,» he says, «a diligent seven years to it; to a master who grudged every hour to me that tended not to his profit, even of those times of leisure and diversion, which the refractoriness of my fellow-servants *obliged* him to allow them, and were usually allowed by other masters to their apprentices. I stole from the hours of rest and relaxation, my reading times for improvement of my mind: aud being engaged in a correspondence with a gentleman, greatly my superior in degree, and of ample fortune, who, had he lived, intended high things for me, those were all the opportunities I had in my apprenticeship to carry it on. But this little incident I may mention; I took care that even my candle was of my own purchasing, that I might not, in the most trifling instance, make my master a sufferer (and who used to call me the pillar of his house,) and not to disable myself by watching or sitting

up, to perform my duty to him in the day-time.» [1]

The correspondence betwixt Richardson and the gentleman who had so well selected an object of patronage, was voluminous; but at the untimely death of his friend, it was, at his particular desire, consigned to the flames.

Several years more were spent in the obscure drudgery of the printing-house, ere Richardson took out his freedom and set up as a master printer. His talents for literature were soon discovered, and, in addition to his proper business, he used to oblige the booksellers, by furnishing them with prefaces, dedications, and such like garnishing of the works submitted to his press. He printed several of the popular periodical papers of the day, and, at length, through the interest of Mr Onslow, the Speaker, obtained the lucrative employment of printing the Journals of the House of Commons, by which he must have reaped considerable advantages, although he occasionally had to complain of delay of payment on the part of government.

Punctual in his engagements, and careful in the superintendence of his business, fortune and respect, its sure accompaniments, began to flow

---

[1] Life of Richardson, vol. i. pp. 41, 42,

in upon Richardson. In 1754, he was chosen Master of the Stationers' Company; and in 1760, he purchased a moiety of the patent of printer to the King, which seems to have added considerably to his revenue. He was now a man in very easy circumstances, and besides his premises in Salisbury Court, he enjoyed the luxury of a villa, first at North End, near Hammersmith, afterwards at Parson's-green.

Richardson was twice married, first to Allington Wilde, his master's daughter, and after her death, in 1731, to the sister of James Leake, bookseller, who survived her distinguished husband. He has made a feeling commemoration of the family misfortunes which he sustained, in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh. «I told you, madam, that I have been married twice, both times happily; you will guess so, as to my first, when I tell you that I cherish memory of my lost wife to this hour; and as to the second, when I assure you, that I can do so without derogating from the merits of, or being disallowed by, my present, who speaks of her, on all occasions, as respectfully and affectionately as I do myself.

«By my first wife, I had five sons and one daughter, some of them living to be delightful prattlers, with all the appearances of sound health, lively in their features, and promising

as to their minds; and the death of one of them I doubt, accelerating, from grief, that of the otherwise laudably afflicted mother. I have had, by my present wife, five girls and one boy; I have buried of these, the promising boy, and one girl: four girls I have living, all at present very good; their mother a true and instructing mother to them.

«Thus have I lost six sons (all my sons), and two daughters, every one of which, to answer your question, I parted with with the utmost regret. Other heavy deprivations of friends very near and very dear have I also suffered. I am very susceptible, I will venture to say, of impressions of this nature. A father, an honest worthy father, I lost by the accident of a broken thigh, snapped by a sudden jerk, endeavouring to recover a slip, passing through his own yard. My father, whom I attended in every stage of his last illness, I long mourned for. Two brothers, very dear to me, I lost abroad. A friend, more valuable than most brothers, was taken from me. No less than eleven affecting deaths in two years! My nerves were so affected with these repeated blows that I have been forced, after trying the whole *materia medica*, and consulting many physicians, as the only palliative (not a remedy to be expected), to go into a regimen; and for seven years past have I for

borne wine, and flesh and fish; and at this time, I and all my family are in mourning for a good sister, with whom neither I would have parted, could I have had my choice. From these affecting dispensations, will you not allow me, madam, to remind an unthinking world, immersed in pleasures, what a life this is that they are so fond of, and to arm them against the affecting changes of it? »[1]

But this amiable and excellent man was not deprived of the most pleasing exercise of his affections, notwithstanding the breaches which had been made among his offspring. Four daughters survived to render those duties which the affectionate temper of their father rendered peculiarly precious to him. Mary was married, during her father's life-time, to Mr Ditcher, a respectable surgeon at Bath. His daughter Martha, who had been his principal amanuensis, became, after his decease, the wife of Edward Bridgen, esq., and Sarah married Mr Crowther, surgeon, in Boswell-Court. Anne, a woman of a most amiable disposition, but whose weak health had often alarmed the affection of her parents, survived, nevertheless, her sisters, as well as her parents. A nephew of Richardson

---

[1] Life of Richardson, vol. i. pp. 48, 49, 50.

paid him, in his declining years, the duties of a son, and assisted him in the conducting of his business, which concludes all it is necessary to say concerning the descendants and connexions of this distinguished author.

The private life of Richardson has nothing to detain the biographer. We have mentioned the successive opportunities which cautiously, yet ably, improved, led him to eminence in his highly respectable profession. He was unceasingly industrious; led astray by no idle views of speculation, and seduced by no temptations to premature expenditure. Industry brought independence, and, finally, wealth in its train; and that well-won fortune was husbanded with prudence, and expended with liberality. A kind and liberal master, he was eager to encourage his servants to persevere in the same course of patient labour by which he had himself attained fortune; and it is said to have been his common practice to hide half-a-crown among the types, that it might reward the diligence of the workman who should first be in the office in the morning. His hospitality was of the most unlimited, as well as the most judicious kind. One of his correspondents describes him as sitting at his door like an old patriarch, and inviting all who passed by to enter and be refreshed; — «and this,» says

Mrs Barbauld, «whether they brought with them the means of amusing their host, or only required his kind notice and that of his family.» He was generous and benevolent to distressed authors, a class of men with whom his profession brought him into contact, and had occasion, more that once, to succour Dr Johnson, during his days of poverty, and to assist his efforts to force himself into public notice. The domestic revolutions of his life, after mentioning the losses he had sustained in his family, may be almost summed up in two great events. He changed his villa, in which he indulged, like other wealthy citizens, from North-End to Parsons-Green; and his printing establishment, from the one side of Salisbury-Court to the other; which last alteration, he complains, did not meet Mrs Richardson's approbation.

If we look yet closer into Richardson's private life (and who loves not to know the slightest particulars concerning a man of his genius?), we find so much to praise, and so very little deserving censure, that we almost think we are reading the description of one of the amiable characters he has drawn in his own works. A love of the human species; a desire to create happiness and to witness it; a life undisturbed by passion, and spent in doing good; pleasures which centred in elegant conversation, in bounti-

ful hospitality, in the exchange of all the kindly intercourse of life, marked the worth and unsophisticated simplicity of the good man's character. He loved children, and knew the rare art of winning their attachment; for, partaking in that respect the sagacity of the canine race, they are not to be deceived by dissembled attention. A lady, who shared the hospitality of Richardson, and gives an excellent account of the internal regulation of his virtuous and orderly family, remembers creeping to his knees, and hanging on his words, as well as the good nature with which he backed her petitions, to be permitted to remain a little longer when she was summoned to bed, and his becoming her guarantee, that she would not require the servant's assistance to put her to bed, and to extinguish the candle. Trifling as these recollections may seem, they are pleasing proofs that the author of *Clarissa* was, in private life, the mild, good man which we wish to suppose him.

The predominant failing of Richardson seems certainly to have been vanity — vanity naturally excited by his great and unparalleled popularity at home and abroad, and by the continual and concentred admiration of the circle in which he lived. Such a weakness finds root in the mind of every one who has obtained general applause,

but Richardson fostered and indulged its growth, which a man of firmer character would have crushed and restrained. The cup of Circe converted men into beasts; and that of praise, when deeply eagerly drained, seldom fails to make wise men in some degree fools. There seems to have been a want of masculine firmness in Richardson's habits of thinking, which combined with his natural tenderness of heart in inducing him to prefer the society of women; and women, from the quickness of their feelings, as well as their natural desire to please, are always the admirers, or rather the idolaters, of genius, and generally its willing flatterers. Richardson was in the daily habit of seeing, conversing, and corresponding with many of the fair sex; and the unvaried and, it would seem, the inexhaustible theme, was his own writings. Hence Johnson, whose loftier pride never suffered him to cherish the meaner foible of vanity, has passed upon Richardson, after a just tribute to his worth, the severe sentence recorded by Boswell: — «I only remember that he expressed a high value for his talents and virtues, but that his perpetual study was to ward off petty inconveniences, and to procure petty pleasures; that his love of continual superiority was such, that he took care always to be surrounded by women, who listened to him implicitly, and did not venture

to contradict his opinions; and that his desire of distinction was so great, that he used to give large vails to Speaker Onslow's servants, that they might treat him with respect.»[1] An anecdote, which seems to confirm Johnson's statement, is given by Boswell, on authority of a lady who was present when the circumstances took place. A gentleman, who had lately been at Paris, sought, while in a large company at Richardson's villa of North-End, to gratify the landlord, by informing him that he had seen his *Clarissa* lying on the king's brother's table. Richardson, observing that a part of the company were engaged in conversation apart, affected not to hear what had been said, but took advantage of the first general pause, to address the gentleman with, «Sir, I think you were saying something about ——;» and then stopped, in a flutter of expectation; which his guest mortified by replying: «A mere trifle,

---

[1] Life of Richardson, vol. i. pp. 171, 172. This character was given at the house of a venerable Scottish judge, now no more, who was so great an admirer of *Sir Charles Grandison*, that he was said to read that work over once every year in the course of his life.

sir, not worth repeating."[1] The truth seems to be, that Richardson, by nature shy, and of a nervous constitution, limited also by a very narrow education, cared not to encounter in conversation with those rougher spirits of the age, where criticism might have had too much severity in it. And he seems to have been reserved even in the presence of Johnson, though bound to him by obligation, and although that mighty aristarch professed to have the talent of «making him rear, «and calling forth his powers. Nor does he appear to have associated much with any of the distinguished geniuses of the age, saving Dr Young, with whom he corresponded late in life. Aaron Hill, who patriotically endeavoured to make him a convert to wines of

---

[1] Johnson, himself, felt pride on finding his Dictionary in Lord Scarsdale's dressing-room, and pointed it out to his friend, with the classical quotation, *Quæ terra nostri non plena laboris.* Yet, under correction of both these great authors, the more substantial fame is to find a popular work, not in the closet of the great, who buy every book which bears a name, but in the cabins of the poor, who must have made some sacrifices to effect the purchase.

British manufacture; and Mr Edwards, author of the *Canons of Criticism*, though both clever men, do not deserve to be mentioned as exceptions.

The society of Richardson was limited to a little circle of amiable and accomplished persons, who were contented to allow a central position to the author of *Clarissa*, and to revolve around him in inferior orbits. The families of Highmore and Duncombe produced more than one individual of this description; and besides Mrs Donellan, and the Misses Fielding, whom Richardson loved, notwithstanding the offences of their brother, there was a Miss Mulso, Miss Westcombe, and other ladies besides, full of veneration for the kind instructor, whom they were permitted to term their adopted father. While *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* were in progress, Richardson used to read a part of his labours to some of this chosen circle every morning, and receive, it may be readily supposed, a liberal tribute of praise, with a very moderate portion of criticism. Miss Highmore, who inherited a paternal taste for painting, has recorded one of those scenes in a small drawing, where Richardson, in a morning-gown and cap, is introduced, reading the manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison* to such a little group.

This was all very amiable, though perhaps bordering on an effeminate love of flattery and applause. But it must be owned that our author disdained not flattery from less pure hands than those of his ordinary companions. We will not dwell upon poor Lœtitia Pilkington, whose wants, rather than her extravagant praises, may be supposed to have conciliated the kindness of Richardson, notwithstanding the infamy of her character. But we are rather scandalized that the veteran iniquity of Old Cibber should not have excluded him from the intimacy of the virtuous Richardson, and that the grey profligate could render himself acceptable to the author of *Sir Charles Grandison* by such effusions of vulgar vivacity as the following, which we cannot forbear inserting. — «I have just finished the sheets you favoured me with; but never found so strong a proof of your sly ill-nature as to have hung me up upon tenters, till I see you again. Z—ds! I have not patience, till I know what's become of her. — Why, you! I don't know what to call you! Ah! ah! you may laugh if you please: but how will you be able to look me in the face, if the lady should ever be able to show *hers* again? What piteous, d—d disgraceful pickle have you plunged her in? For God's sake send me the sequel, or —

I don't kuow what to say! »[1] Yet another delectable quotation from the letters of that merry old good-for-nothing, which, as addressed by a rake of the theatre to the most sentimental author of the age, and as referring to one of his favourite and most perfect characters, is, in its way, a matchless specimen of elegant vivacity. — «The delicious meal I made of Miss Byron on Sunday last has given me an appetite for another slice of her, off from the spit, before she is served up to the public table. If about five o'clock to-morrow afternoon will not be inconvenient, Mrs Brown and I will come and piddle upon a bit more of her; but pray let your whole family, with Mrs Richardson at the head of them, come in for their share.»[2]

An appetite for praise, and an over-indulgence of that appetite, not only teaches an author to be gratified with the applause of the unworthy, and to prefer it to the censure of the wise, but it leads to the less pardonable error of begrudging to others their due share of public

---

[1] Correspondence of Richardson, vol. ii. pp. 172, 173.

[2] Correspondence of Richardson, vol. ii. p. 176.

favour. Richardson was too good, too kind a man to let literary envy settle deep in his bosom, yet an overweening sense of his own importance seems to have prevented his doing entire justice to the claims of others. He appears to have been rather too prone to believe ill of those authors, against whose works exceptions, in point of delicacy, might justly be taken. He has inserted in his Correspondence an account of Swift's earlier life, highly injurious to the character of that eminent writer; and which the industry of Dr Barret has since shown to be a gross misrepresentation. The same tone of feeling has made him denounce, with the utmost severity, the indecorum of *Tristram Shandy*, without that tribute of applause which, in every view of the case, was so justly due to the genius of the author. Richardson seems also to have joined Aaron Hill in the cuckoo-song, that Pope had written himself out; — and finally, the dislike which he manifests towards Fielding, though it originated in a gratuitous insult on the part of the latter, breaks out too often, and is too anxiously veiled under an affectation of charity and candour, not to lead us to suspect that the author of *Tom Jones* was at least as obnoxious from the success as from the alleged immorality of his productions. It would have been generous to have reflected, that, while his own bark lay

safe in harbour, or was wafted on by the favouring gale of applause, his less fortunate rival had to struggle with the current and the storm. But this disagreeable subject we have already canvassed in Fielding's life, and we will not further dwell upon it. Of all pictures of literary life, that which exhibits two men of transcendent, though different talents. engaged in the depreciation of each other, is most humbling to human nature, most unpleasing to a candid and enlightened reader. Excepting against Fielding, Richardson seems to have nourished no literary feud. But it is to be regretted that, in his Correspondence, we find few traces that he either loved or admired contemporary genius.

It may appear invidious to dwell thus long on a sufficiently venial speck in a character so fair and amiable. But it is no useless lesson to show that a love of praise, and a feeling of literary emulation, not to say vanity, foibles pardonable in themselves, and rarely separated from the poetical temperament, lead to consequences detrimental to the deserved reputation of the most ingenious author, and the most worthy man, as a dead fly will pollute the most precious unguent. Every author, but especially those who cultivate the lighter kinds of literature, should teach themselves the stern lesson, that their art must fall under the frequent cen-

sure, *non est tanti*, and, for this reason they should avoid, as they would the circle of Alcina, that sort of society, who so willingly form around every popular writer an atmosphere of assentation and flattery.

Dismissing these considerations, we cannot omit to state that Richardson's correspondence with one of his most intelligent and enthusiastic admirers, commenced, and was for some time carried on, in a manner which might have formed a pleasing incident in one of the author's own romances. This was Lady Bradshaigh, the wife of Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh, in Lancashire, whose very considerable talent, and ardent taste for literature, had to contend with the prejudices which in those days seemed to have rendered it ridiculous for a lady of rank and fashion, the wife of a country gentleman of estate and consideration, to enter into correspondence with a professed author, To gratify the strong propensity she felt to engage in literary intercourse with an author of Richardson's distinction, Lady Bradshaigh had recourse to the romantic expedient of entering into correspondence with him under an assumed name, and with all the precautions against discovery which are sometimes resorted to for less honest purposes. Richardson and his incognita maintained a close exchange of letters, until they

seem on both sides to have grown desirous of becoming personally known to each other; and the author was induced to walk in the Park at a particular hour, and to send an accurate description of his person, that his fair correspondent might be able, herself unknown, to distinguish him from the vulgar herd of passengers. The following portrait exhibits all the graphical accuracy with which the author was accustomed to detail the appearance of his imaginary personages, and is at the same time very valuable, as it describes a man of genius in whom great powers of observing life and manners were combined with bashful and retired habits. — «I go through the Park once or twice a week to my little retirement; but I will for a week together be in it every day three or four hours, at your command, till you tell me you have seen a person who answers to this description; namely, short; rather plump than emaciated, notwithstanding his complaints; about five feet five inches; fair wig; lightish cloth coat, all black besides; one hand generally in his bosom, the other a cane in it, which he leans upon under the skirts of his coat usually, that it may imperceptibly serve him as a support when attacked by sudden tremors or startings, and dizziness, which too frequently attack him, but, thank God, not so often as formerly; looking directly

fore-right, as passers-by would imagine, but observing all that stirs on either hand of him, without moving his short neck; hardly ever turning back; of a light brown complexion; teeth not yet failing him; smoothish-faced and ruddy-cheeked; at some times looking to be about sixty-five, at other times much younger; a regular even pace, stealing away ground rather than seeming to rid it; a grey eye, too often overclouded by mistiness from the head; by chance lively; very lively it will be if he have hope of seeing a lady whom he loves and honours; his eye always on the ladies; if they have very large hoops, he looks down and supercilious, and as if he would be thought wise, but perhaps the sillier for that; as he approaches a lady, his eye is never fixed first upon her face, but upon her feet, and thence he raises it up pretty quickly for a dull eye; and one would think (if we thought him at all worthy of observation) that from her air, and (the last beheld) her face, he sets her down in his mind as *so* or *so*, and then passes on to the next object he meets; only then looking back if he greatly likes or dislikes, as if he would see if the lady appear to be all of a piece, in the one light or in the other. Are these marks distinct enough, if you are resolved to keep all the advantages you set out with? And from this odd, this gro-

tesque figure, think you, madam, that you have any thing to apprehend? Any thing that will not rather promote than check your mirth? I dare be bold to say (and allow it too,) that you would rather see this figure than any other you ever saw, whenever you should find yourself graver than you wish to be.»[1]

Lady Bradshaigh, like other ladies upon similar occasions, could not resist the opportunity of exercising a little capricious tyranny. Richardson's walks in the Park were for some time unnoticed. Both parties seem to have indulged in a gentle coquetry, until both were likely to lose temper, and the complaints on the gentleman's side became a little keen and eager. At length Lady Bradshaigh dropped the mask, and continued afterwards to be in her own person the valued correspondent of the author. It is but justice to say, that the sense and spirit with which she supports her own views, even when contrary to those of Richardson, render her letters the most aggreeable in the collection, and constitute a great difference betwixt her and some of the author's female correspondents, who are satisfied with becoming the echoes of his sentiments and opinions. Lady Bradshaigh had a sister, Lady Echlin, who also corresponded

---

[1] Correspondence of Richardson, vol. iv. pp. 290, 291, 292.

with Richardson; but although she appears to have been an excellent woman, her letters want both the vivacity and talent displayed in those of Lady Bradshaigh. Yet Lady Echlin, too, her had moments of ambitious criticism. She even tried her hand at reforming Lovelace, as Mrs Barbauld informs us, by the aid of a Dr Christian; a consummation, as the reader will anticipate, much better meant than successfully executed.

Neither the admiration of the public, the applause of admirers, nor the deserved affection of his friends and family, could screen this amiable author from his share in the lot of humanity. Besides his family misfortunes, Richardson was afflicted with indifferent health, in the painful shape of nervous disorders. Sedentary habits and close attention to business had rendered a constitution delicate which nature had never made strong; and it will readily be believed, that the workings of an imagination, constantly labouring in the fields of fiction, increased, rather than relieved, complaints which affected his nerves at an early period. If, as he somewhere says, he made the distress of his character his own, and wept for Clarissa and Clementina, as if they had not been the creatures of his own fancy, the exhaustion of his spirits must have exasperated his malady. His nerves were latterly so much shaken, that he

could not convey a glass of wine to his mouth, unless it was put into a large tumbler; and unable to undergo the fatigue of communicating with the principal superintendent of his business, who chanced unluckily to be hard of hearing, all communication between them was maintained by means of writing. He did not long survive the space assigned by the Psalmist as the ordinary duration of human life. On the 4th July, 1761, Samuel Richardson died, aged seventy-two, and was buried, according to his own directions, beside his first wife, in the middle aisle of St Bride's church, followed by the affectionate grief of those who were admitted to his society, and the sorrow of all who mourned over talents uniformly and conscientiously dedicated to the service of virtue. The following epitaph was written by his learned friend Mrs Carter, but is not, we believe inscribed on his tomb.

«If ever warm benevolence was dear,
If ever wisdom gain'd esteem sincere,
Or genuine fancy deep attention won,
Approach with awe the dust of Richardson.
What though his muse, through distant regions known,
Might scorn the tribute of this humble stone;
Yet pleasing to his gentle shade must prove
The meanest pledge of Friendship and of Love;

For oft will these, from venal throngs exiled,
And oft will Innocence, of aspect mild,
And white-robed Charity, with streaming eyes,
Frequent the cloister where their patron lies.
This, reader, learn; and learn from one whose woe
Bids her wild verse in artless accents flow:
For, could she frame her numbers to commend
The husband, father, citizen, and friend;
How would her muse display, in equal strain,
The critic's judgment, and the writer's vein! —
Ah, no! expect not from the chisel'd stone,
The praises graven on our hearts alone:
There shall his fame a lasting shrine acquire,
And ever shall his moving page inspire
Pure truth, fixt honour, virtue's pleasing lore,
While taste and science crown this favour'd shore.»[1]

Richardson's character as a man, after all deductions have been made for circumstances and for human frailty, cannot be too highly estimated. It remains only to consider him as an author, and, for this purpose, to review his literary career, and the productions which it gave rise to.

---

[1] Life of Richardson, vol. i. p. 212.

It was by mere accident that Richardson appears to have struck out the line of composition so peculiarly adapted to his genius. He had at all times the pen of a ready correspondent; and, from his early age, had, as we have seen, been accustomed to lend it to others, and to write, of course, under different characters from his own. There can he no doubt that, in the service of the young women who employed him as their amanuensis and confidant, this natural talent must have been considerably improved: and as little that the exercise of such a power was pleasing to the possessor. Chance at length occasioned its being employed in the service of the public. The account will be best given in the words of his own letter to Aaron Hill, who, in common with the public at large, had become pressingly anxious to know if there was any foundation in fact for the history of Pamela.

«I will now write to your question — whether there was any original ground-work of fact for the general foundation of Pamela's story.

«About twenty-five years ago, a gentleman, with whom I was intimately acquainted, but who, alas, is now no more! [probably the correspondent of fortune and rank, mentioned p. 5] met with such a story as that of Pamela, in one of the summer tours which he used to take for his pleasure, attended with one servant

only. At every inn he put up at, it was his way to inquire after curiosities in its neighbourhood, either ancient or modern; and particularly he asked who was the owner of a fine house, as it seemed to him, beautifully situated, which he had passed by (describing it,) within a mile or two of the inn.

«It was a fine house, the landlord said, the owner was Mr B —, a gentleman of a large estate in more counties than one. That his and his lady's history engaged the attention of every body who came that way, and put a stop to all other inquiries, though the house and gardens were well worth seeing. The lady, he said, was one of the greatest beauties in England; but the qualities of her mind had no equal; beneficent, prudent, and equally beloved and admired by high and low. That she had been taken at twelve years of age, for the sweetness of her manners and modesty, and for an understanding above her years, by Mr B —'s mother, a truly worthy lady, to wait on her person. Her parents, ruined by suretiships, were remarkably honest and pious, and had instilled into their daughter's mind the best principles. When their misfortunes happened first, they attempted a little school, in their village, where they were much beloved; he teaching writing and the first rules of arithmetic to boys; his wife

plain needle-work to girls, and to knit and spin; but that it answered not; and when the lady took their child, the industrious man earned his bread by day-labour, and the lowest kind of husbandry.

«That the girl, improving daily in beauty, modesty, and genteel and good behaviour, by the time she was fifteen, engaged the attention of her lady's son, a young gentleman of free principles, who, on her lady's death, attempted, by all manner of temptations and devices, to seduce her. That she had recourse to as many innocent stratagems to escape the snares laid for her virtue; once, however, in dispair, having been near drowning; that at last, her noble resistance, watchfulness, and excellent qualities, subdued him, and he thought fit to make her his wife. That she behaved herself with so much dignity, sweetness, and humility, that she made herself beloved of every body, and even by his relations, who at first despised her; and now had the blessings both of rich and poor, and the love of her husband.

«The gentleman who told me this added, that he had the curiosity to stay in the neighbourhood from Friday to Sunday, that he might see this happy couple at church, from which they never absented themselves: that, in short, he did see them; that her deportment was all sweet-

ness, ease, and dignity mingled; that he never saw a lovelier woman: that her husband was as fine a man, and seemed even proud of his choice; and that she attracted the respects of the persons of rank present, and had the blessings of the poor. — The relater of the story told me all this with transport.

«This, sir, was the foundation of Pamela's story; but little did I think to make a story of it for the press. That was owing to this occasion.

«Mr Rivington and Mr Osborne, whose names are on the title-page, had long been urging me to give them a little book (which, they said, they were often asked after) of familiar letters on the useful concerns in common life; and at last I yielded to their importunity, and began to recollect such subjects as I thought would be useful in such a design, and formed several letters accordingly, and, among the rest, I thought of giving one or two as cautions to young folks circumstanced as Pamela was. Little did I think, at first, of making one, much less two volumes of it. But, when I began to recollect what had, so many years before, been told me by my friend, I thought the story, if written in an easy and natural manner, suitable to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing, that might possibly turn

young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and, dismissing the improbable and marvellous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue. I therefore gave way to enlargement; and so Pamela became as you see her. But so little did I hope for the approbation of judges, that I had not the courage to send the two volumes to your ladies, until I found the books well received by the public.

«While I was writing the two volumes, my worthy-hearted wife, and the young lady who is with us, when I had read them some part of the story, which I had begun without their knowing it, used to come into my little closet every night, with — 'Have you any more of Pamela, Mr R.? we are come to hear a little more of Pamela,' etc. This encouraged me to prosecute it, which I did so diligently; through all my other business, that, by a memorandum on my copy, I began it November 10, 1739, and finished it January 10, 1739 — 40. And I have often, censurable as I might be thought for my vanity for it, and listening to the taste of my two female friends, had the story of Moliere's *Old Woman* in my thoughts upon the occasion.

«If justly low were my thoughts of this little

history, you will wonder how it came by such an assuming and very impudent preface. It was thus. — The approbation of these two female friends, and of two more, who were so kind as to give me prefaces for it, but which were much too long and circumstantial, as I thought, made me resolve myself on writing a preface; I therefore, spirited by the good opinion of these four, and knowing that the judgments of nine parts in ten of readers were but in hanging-sleeves, struck a bold stroke in the preface you see, having the umbrage of the editor's character[1] to screen myself behind. — And thus, sir, all is out. »[2]

Pamela, of which the reader has thus learned the origin, appeared in 1740, and made a most powerful sensation on the public. Hitherto, romances had been written, generally speaking, in the old French taste, containing the protracted amours of Princes and Princesses, told in language coldly extravagant, and metaphysically absurd. In these wearisome performances there

---

[1] Under the character of editor, he gave great commendation to the letters, for which he was blamed by some of his friends.

[2] Life of Richardson, vol. i. pp. 69-76.

appeared not the most distant allusion to the ordinary tone of feeling, the slightest attempt to paint mankind as it exists in the ordinary walks of life — all was rant and bombast, stilt and buskin. It will be Richardson's eternal praise, did he merit no more, that he tore from his personages those painted vizards, which concealed, under a clumsy and affected disguise, every thing like the natural lineaments of the human countenance, and placed them before us bare-faced, in all the actual changes of feature and complexion, and all the light and shade of human passion. It requires a reader to be in some degree acquainted with the huge folios of inanity, over which our ancestors yawned themselves to sleep, ere he can estimate the delight they must have experienced from this unexpected return to truth and nature.

The simplicity of Richardson's tale aided the effect of surprise. An innocent young woman, whose virtue a dissolute master assails by violence, as well as all the milder means of seduction, conquers him at last, by persevering in the paths of rectitude; and is rewarded by being raised to the station of his wife, the lawful participator in his rank and fortune. Such is the simple story by which the world was so much surprised and affected.

The judicious criticism of Mrs Barbauld has

pointed out that the character of Pamela is far from attaining an heroic cast of virtue. On the contrary, there is a strain of cold-blooded prudence which runs through all the latter part of the novel, to which we are obliged almost to deny the name of virtue. She appears originally to have had no love for Mr B.; no passion to combat in her own bosom; no treachery to subdue in the garrison while the enemy was before the walls. Richardson voluntarily evaded giving this colouring to his tale, because it was intended more for edification than for effect; and because the example of a *soubrette* falling desperately in love with a handsome young master, might have been imitated by many in that rank of life, who could not have defended themselves exactly like Pamela against the object of so dangerous a passion. Besides, Richardson was upon principle unwilling to exhibit his favoured characters as greatly subject to violent passion of any kind, and was much disposed to dethrone Cupid, whom romance writers had installed as the literal sovereign of gods and men. Still the character of Pamela is somewhat sunk by the eager gratitude with which she accepts the hand of a tyrannical and cruel master, when he could not at a cheaper rate make himself master of her person. There is a parade of generosity on his side, and of creeping submis-

sion on hers, which the case by no means calls for; and unless, like her namesake, in Pope's satire, she can console herself with the «gilt chariot and the Flanders mares," we should have thought her more likely to be happy had she become the wife of poor Mr Williams, of whose honest affection she makes somewhat too politic a use in the course of her trials, and whom she discards too coolly when better prospects seem to open upon her.

It is perhaps invidious to enter too closely upon the general tendency of a work of entertainment. But when the admirers of *Pamela* challenged for that work the merit of doing more good than twenty sermons, we demur to the motion. Its good effects must of course have operation among young women in circumstances somewhat similar to those of the heroine; and, in that rank, it may be questioned whether the example is not as well calculated to encourage a spirit of rash enterprise, as of virtuous resistance. If Pamela became Esquire B—'s lady, it was only on account of her virtuous resistance to his criminal attacks; but it may occur to an humble maiden (and the case we believe is not hypothetical) that to merit Pamela's reward, she must go through Pamela's trials; and that there can be no great harm in affording some encouragement to the assailant. We need not

add how dangerous this experiment must be for both parties.

But we have elsewhere intimated an opinion, that the direct and obvious moral to be deduced from a fictitious narrative is of much less consequence to the public than the mode in which the story is treated in the course of its details. If the author introduces scenes which excite evil passions, if he familiarizes the mind of the readers with impure ideas, or sophisticates their understanding with false views of morality, it will be an unavailing defence that, in the end of his book, he has represented virtue as triumphant. In the same manner, although some objections may be made to the deductions which the author desired, and expected should be drawn from the story of *Pamela*, yet the pure and modest character of the English maiden is so well maintained during the work; her sorrows and afflictions are borne with so much meekness; her little intervals of hope or comparative tranquillity break in on her troubles so much like the specks of blue sky through a cloudy atmosphere, that the whole recollection is soothing, tranquillizing, and, doubtless, edifying. We think little of Mr B—, his character, or his motives, and are only delighted with the preferment of our favourite, because it seems to give so much satisfaction to herself.

The pathetic passage in which she describes her ineffectual attempt to escape, may be selected, among many, as an example of the beautiful propriety and truth with which the author was able to throw himself into the character of his heroine, and to think and reason, and express those thoughts and reasons, exactly as she must have done, had the fictitious incident really befallen such a person.

The inferior persons are sketched with great truth, and may be considered as a group of English portraits of the period. In particular, the characters of the father and mother, old Andrews and his wife, are, like that of Pamela herself, in the very best style of drawing and colouring; and the interview of the former with his landlord, when he inquires after the fate of his daughter, would have immortalized Richardson had he never written another line.

It may be here observed that, had the author lived in the present day, he would probably have thrown into the character of the deeply injured peasant a spirit of manly indignation, which the occasion demanded. But in Richardson's time, the bonds of snbordination in society were drawn very strictly, and he himself appears to have had high and exaggerated ideas of the importance of wealth and rank, as well as of domestic authority of every kind. Mr B—

does not seem to have incurred any severe censure among his neighbours for the villainies which he practises upon Pamela; she herself supposes them more than atoned for by his condescension in wedding her, and consents to receive into favour even the unwomanly and infamous Mrs Jewkes, because the old procuress had acted a part she should have been hanged for, at the command, forsooth, of a generous master. There is want of taste in this humiliation; and a touch of spirit upon the occasion would not have misbecome even the all-forgiving Pamela.

Notwithstanding such defects, which, in fact, only occur to us, upon a critical perusal, the pleasing simplicity of a tale so true to nature commanded the general and enthusiastic applause of the public. It was in vain that the mischievous wit of Fielding found a source for ridicule in that very simplicity of moral and of incident, and gave the world *Joseph Andrews*, an avowed parody upon the *Pamela* of Richardson. It chanced, with that very humorous performance, as with the *Shepherd's Week* of Gay, that readers lost sight altogether of the satirical purpose with which it was written, and were delighted with it on account of its own intrinsic merit. We may be permitted to regret, therefore, the tone of mind with which Fielding composed a

work, in professed ridicule of such genius as that of Richardson; but how can we wish that undone, without which Parson Adams would not have existed?

The success of Pamela induced some wretched imitator to carry on the story in a continuation, entitled *Pamela in High Life*, This intrusion provoked Richardson to a similar attempt, in which he represented Pamela's husband as reclaimed from the prosecution of a guilty intrigue, by the patient sorrows of his virtuous wife. The work met with the fate of other continuations, and has been always justly accounted an unnatural and unnecessary appendage to a tale so complete within itself as the first part of *Pamela*.

Eight years after the appearance of *Pamela*, Richardson published *Clarissa*, the work on which his fame, as a classic of England, will rest for ever. The tale, like that of its predecessor, is very simple, but the scene is laid in a higher rank of life, the characters are drawn with a bolder pencil, and the whole accompaniments are of a far loftier mood.

Clarissa, a character as nearly approaching to perfection as the pencil of the author could draw, is persecuted by a tyrannical father and brother, an envious sister, and the other members of a family, who devoted every thing to

its aggrandizement, in order to compel her to marry a very disagreeable suitor. These intrigues and distresses she communicates, in a series of letters, to her friend Miss Howe, a young lady of an ardent, impetuous disposition, and an enthusiast in friendship. After a series of sufferings, rising almost beyond endurance, Clarissa is tempted to throw herself upon the protection of her admirer Lovelace, a character, in painting whom, Richardson has exerted his utmost skill, until he has attained the very difficult and critical point of rendering every reader pleased with his wit and abilities, even while detesting the villainy of his conduct. Lovelace is represented as having devoted his life and talents to the subversion of female virtue; and not even the charms of Clarissa, or her unprotected situation, can reconcile him to the idea of marriage. This species of perverted Quixotry is not much understood in the present age, when a modern voluptuary seeks the gratification of his passions where it is most easily obtained, and is seldom at the trouble of assault, when there is any probability of the fortress being resolutely defended. But, in former days, when men, like Lord Baltimore, were found, at the risk of life itself, capable of employing the most violent means for the ruin of innocence, a character approaching that of Lovelace was not per-

haps so unnatural. That he should have been so successful in previous amours is not very probable; and as Mrs Barbauld justly observes, he was more likely to have been run through the body long before ever he saw Colonel Morden. But some exaggeration must be allowed to the author of a romance; and, considering the part which Lovelace had to perform, it was necessary that this character should be highly coloured. This perfidious lover, actuated, it would seem, as much by the love of intrigue and of enterprise, as by his desire to humble the Harlowe family, and lower the pride of this their beloved daughter, whose attachment to him was not of the devoted character which he conceived was due to his merits, forms a villainous scheme for the destruction of her virtue. Without the least regard for the character of a woman, whom he always seems to have intended for his wife at some future period, he contrives to lodge her with the keeper of a common brothel, and to place around her the inmates of such a place. At length, every effort to accomplish his guilty purpose having failed, he administers opiates, and violates the person of his victim while under their influence. But he obtains nothing by his crime, save infamy and remorse. The lady dies of a broken heart, and he himself falls by the sword of one of her kinsmen.

It cannot be denied, that this story is attended with many improbabilities. Allowing for Lovelace's very peculiar character, admitting that his selfishness, his pride, and his love of intrigue had hardened his heart to all consequences, surrounded it, as he himself says, «with flint and callus,» and induced him to prefer a crooked and most foul path to one which was fair and honourable, there is no excuse for Belford, as a man and a gentleman, keeping his friend's infamous secret. Nay, we are apt to blame Clarissa herself, who, in her escape to Hampstead, did not place herself under the guardianship of a magistrate. We will venture to say that Justice Fielding would have afforded her his most effectual protection; and that if Tomlinson, the false Miss Montague, or any other of Lovelace's agents, had ventured to appear in the office, they would have been committed by his worship as old acquaintances. In our own day, too, though that was not a feature of the writer's age, the whole story of the elopement would have flown on the wings of the newspapers, not to Hampstead and Highgate only, but to Truro and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and not a Mrs Moore or Miss Rawlins in England but would have been too particularly acquainted «with the mysterious affair of Harlowe-place» to be deceived by the representations of

Lovelace. But it is unfair to tax an author too severely upon improbabilities, without conceding that his story could have no existence; and we have the less title to do so, because in the history of real life, that which is actually true bears often very little resemblance to that which is probable. If every assault were skilfully parried, and every man played with ability, life would become like a trial of skill with foils, or like a game at chess, and strength and address would no longer be defeated by time and chance, which, in the words of Solomon, happen unto all men.

The conduct of the injured Clarissa through the subsequent scenes, which are perhaps among the most affecting and sublime in the English school of romance, raise her, in her calamitous condition, so far above all around her, that her character beams on the reader with something like superhuman splendour. Our eyes weep, our hearts ache, yet our feelings triumph with the triumph of virtue, as it rises over all the odds which the deepest misfortune, and even degradation, have thrown into the scale. There is a noble pride amid the sorrow with which we contemplate the distresses of such a being as Clarissa, rising even over that personal dishonour, which, when it has once taken place, under what circumstances soever, is ge-

nerally understood to infer degradation. It was reserved to Richardson to show that there is a chastity of the soul, which can beam out spotless and unsullied, even after that of the person has been violated; and the dignity of Clarissa, under her disgrace and her misfortunes, reminds us of the saying of the ancient poet, that a good man, struggling with the tide of adversity, and surmounting it, was a sight which the immortal gods might look down upon with pleasure. This is a subject which Mrs Barbauld has dwelt upon with a suitable feeling of the dignity of her sex. The more contracted and limited view of Clarissa's merit, merely as resisting the efforts of a practised seducer, although is was unquestionably in Richardson's view, his biographer reasonably spurns, as degrading to womanhood. Clarissa, bred in a superior rank of life, led aside by no strong passion, courted by a lover who had immediate marriage in his power, must have been a subordinate person indeed, if incabable of repelling his attempts at dishonouring her person. I cannot avoid transcribing the excellent reflections which follow this reasoning. «The real moral of Clarissa is, that virtue is triumphant in every situation; that, in circumstances the most painful and degrading, in a prison, in a brothel, in grief, in distraction, in despair, it is still lovely, still commanding, still the

object of our veneration, of our fondest affections; that if it is seated on the ground, it can still say with Constance,

'Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it!'

"The novelist that has produced this effect has performed his office well, and it is immaterial what particular maxim is selected under the name of a moral, while such are the reader's feelings. If our feelings are in favour of virtue, the novel is virtuous; if of vice, the novel is vicious. The greatness of Clarissa is shown by her separating herself from her lover as soon as she perceives his dishonourable views; in her choosing death rather than a repetition of the outrage; in her rejection of those overtures of marriage, which a common mind might have accepted of, as a refuge against worldly dishonour; in her firm indignant carriage, mixed with calm patience and christian resignation; and in the greatness of mind with which she views and enjoys the approaches of death, and her meek forgiveness of her unfeeling relations."

These arguments, however, were not at first readily admitted by Richardson's warmest admirers. The first four volumes of *Clarissa* having appeared, and a report having been spread,

that the catastrophe was to be unfortunate, many remonstrances were made on the subject by those readers who shrunk from the extreme pain inflicted by the tragical part of the narrative, and, laying aside the contemplation of the moral, complained, that in a professed work of amusement, the author had contrived to harrow up their feelings to a degree that was intolerably painful. Old Cibber raved on the subject like a profane bedlamite; and, what was perhaps of more consequence to Richardson, the rumour of Lovelace's success and Clarissa's death occasioned Lady Bradshaigh's opening her romantic correspondence with him, under the assumed name of Belfour. In reply to the expostulations of the latter, Richardson frankly stated his own noble plan, of which he had too just a conception, to alter it in compliance with the remonstrances of his correspondents.

«Indeed you are not particular in your wishes for a happy ending, as it is called; nor can I go through some of the scenes myself without being sensibly touched (did I not say that I was another Pygmalion?). But yet I had to show, for example sake, a young lady struggling nobly with the greatest difficulties, and triumphing from the best motives, in the course of distresses, the tenth part of which would have sunk even manly hearts; yet tenderly educated, born

to affluence, naturally meek, although, where an exertion of spirit was necessary, manifesting herself to be a true heroine.»[1]

Defeated in this point, the friends and correspondents of Richardson became even more importunate for the reformation of Lovelace, and the winding up the story by his happy union with Clarissa. On this subject also Cibber ranted, and the ladies implored, with an earnestness that seems to imply at once, a belief that the persons in whom they interested themselves had an existence, and that it was in the power of the writer of their memoirs to turn their destiny which way he pleased; and one damsel, eager for the conversion of Lovelace, implores Richardson to «save his soul;» as if there had been actually a living sinner in the case, and his future state had depended on her admired author.

Against all these expostulations Richardson hardened himself. He knew, that to bestow Clarissa upon the repentant Lovelace, would have been to undermine the fabric he had built. This was the very purpose which the criminal had proposed to himself, in the atrocious crime

---

[1] Correspondence of Richardson, vol. iv. p. 186.

he had committed, and it was to dismiss him from the scene rewarded, not punished. The sublimity of the moral would have been altogether destroyed, since vice would have been no longer rendered hateful and miserable through its very success, nor virtue honoured and triumphant even by its degradation. The death of Clarissa alone could draw down on the guilty head of her betrayer the just and necessary retribution, and his guilt was of far too deep a dye to be otherwise expiated. Besides, the author felt, and forcibly pointed out, the degradation which the fervent creation of his fancy must have sustained, could she, with all her wrongs forgotten, and with the duty imposed on her by matrimony, to love, honour, and obey her betrayer, have sat down the common-place good wife of her reformed rake, Indeed, those who peruse the work with attention, will perceive that the author has been careful, in the earlier stages of his narrative, to bar out every prospect of such a union. Notwithstanding the levities and constitutional good humour of Lovelace, his mind is too much perverted, his imagination too much inflamed by his own perverted Quixotism, and, above all, his heart is too much hardened, to render it possible for any one seriously to think of his conversion as sincere, or his union with Clarrissa as happy.

He had committed a crime for which he deserved death by the law of the country; and notwithstanding those good qualities with which the author has invested him, that he may not seem an actual incarnate fiend, there is no reader but feels vindictive pleasure when Morden passes the sword through his body.

On the other hand, Clarissa, reconciled to her violator, must have lost, in the eye of the reader, that dignity, with which the refusal of his hand, the only poor reparation he could offer, at present invests her; and it was right and fitting that a creature, every way so excellent, should, as is fabled of the ermine, pine to death on account of the stain with which she had been so injuriously sullied. We cannot, consistently with the high idea which we have previously entertained of her purity of character, imagine her surviving the contamination. On the whole, as Richardson himself pleaded, Clarissa has, as the narrative presently stands, the greatest of triumphs, even in this world — the greatest even in and after the outrage, and because of the outrage, that any woman ever had.

It has often been observed, that the extreme severity of the parents and relatives in this celebrated novel does not belong to our day, or, perhaps, even to Richardson's; and that Clarissa's dutiful scruples at assuming her own estate,

or extricating herself by Miss Howe's means, are driven to extremity. Something no doubt must be allowed for the licence of an author, who must necessarily, in order to command interest and attention, extend his incidents to the extreme verge of probability; but besides, it is well known, that at least within the century, the notions of the *patria potestas* were of a much severer nature than those now entertained; that forced marriages have actually taken place, and that in houses of considerable rank; that the voice of public opinion had then comparatively little effect upon great and opulent families, inhabiting their country seats, and living amid their own dependants, where strange violences were sometimes committed, under the specious pretext of enforcing domestic discipline. Each family was a little tribe within itself; and the near relations, like the elders among the Jews, had their Sanhedrim, where resolutions were adopted, as laws to control the free will of each individual member. It is upon this family compact that the Harlowes ground the rights which they assert with so much tyranny; and before the changes which have slackened the bonds of relationship, we believe that such incidents were not unfrequent. But whether we consider Richardson as exhibiting a state of manners which may have lingered in the remote

parts of England down to his own time, or suppose that he coloured them according to his own invention, and particularly according to his high notions of the «awful rule and right supremacy," lodged in the head of a family, there can be no doubt of the spirit with which the picture is executed; and particularly of the various gradations in which the Harlowe spirit exhibits itself, in the insolent and conceited brother, the mean and envious sister, the stern and unrelenting father, softened down in the elder brother James, and again roughened and exaggerated in the old seaman Anthony, each of whom, in various modifications, exhibits the same family features of pride, avarice, and ambition.

Miss Howe is an admirably sketched character, drawn in strong contrast to that of Clarissa, yet worthy of being her friend — with more of worldly perspicacity, though less of abstracted principle, and who, when they argue upon points of doubt and delicacy, is often able, by going directly to the question at issue, to start the game, while her more gifted correspondent does but beat the bush. Her high spirit and disinterested devotion for her friend, acknowledging, as she does on all occasions, her own inferiority, show her in a noble point of view; and though we are afraid she must

have given honest Hickman (notwithstanding her resolutions to the contrary) rather an uneasy time of it after marriage, yet it is impossible not to think that she was a prize worth suffering for.

The publication of *Clarissa* raised the fame of the author to the height. No work had appeared before, perhaps none has appeared since, containing so many direct appeals to the passions, stated too in a manner so irresistible. And high as his reputation stood in his own country, it was even more exalted in those of France and Germany, whose imaginations are more easily excited, and their passions more easily moved by tales of fictitious distress, than are the cold-blooded English. Foreigners of distinction have been known to visit Hampstead, and to inquire for the Flask-walk, distinguished as a scene in Clarissa's history, just as travellers visit the rocks of Meillerie, to view the localities of Rousseau's tale of passion.

There was never, perhaps, an author who was not encouraged by popular applause again to venture himself before the public; and Richardson, secure, moreover, in the prepossession of a large party of friends and admirers, was, of course, no exception to the general rule.

The subject of the third and last novel of this eminent author seems to have been in a great

degree dictated by the criticism which Clarissa had undergone. To his own surprise, as he assured his correspondents, he found that the gaiety, bravery, and, occasionally, generosity of Lovelace, joined to his courage and ingenuity, had, in spite of his crimes, made him find too much grace in the eyes of his fair readers. He had been so studious to prevent this, that when he perceived his rake was rising into an undue and dangerous degree of favour with some of the young ladies of his own school, he threw in some darker shades of character. In this, according to the eulogy of Johnson, he was eminently successful; but still Lovelace appeared too captivating in the eyes of his fair friends, and even of Lady Bradshaigh; so that nothing remained for the author, in point of morality, but to prepare with all speed an antidote to the poison which he had incautiously administered.

With this view, the author tasked his talents to embody the *beau ideal* of a virtuous character, who should have all the title to admiration which he could receive from wit, rank, figure, accomplishment, and fashion, yet compounded inseparably with the still higher qualifications which form the virtuous citizen and the faithful votary of religion. It was with this view that Richardson produced the work originally denominated *The Good Man*, a title which, before

publication, he judiciously exchanged for that of *Sir Charles Grandison.*

It must be acknowledged, that although the author exerted his utmost ability to succeed in the task which he had assumed, and, so far as detached parts of the work are considered, has given the same marks of genius which he employed in his former novels, yet this last production has neither the simplicity of the first two volumes of *Pamela*, nor the deep and overwhelming interest of the inimitable *Clarissa*, and must, considering it as a whole, be ranked considerably beneath both these works.

The principal cause of failure may be perhaps traced to Richardson's too strong recollection of the aversion which his friendly critics and correspondents had displayed, to the melancholy scenes in *Clarissa*, in which, darkening and deepening as the story proceeds, his heroine is involved, until the scene is closed by death. He was resolved, perhaps, to give his readers some indemnification, and having formerly shown them virtue in its state of earthly persecution and calamity, now resolved to introduce her, as John Bunyan says, in her golden slippers, and walking abroad in the sunshine. But the author did not sufficiently reflect, that the beacon, upon an exposed headland, sending forth its saving light amid the rain and the storm,

and burning where all around combines to its extinction, is a far grander and more interesting object to the imagination than the chandelier in a lordly hall, secured by walls and casements from the possibility even of a transient breeze agitating its brilliancy of lustre.

Sir Charles Grandison is a man of large fortune, of rank, and of family, high in the opinion of all who know him, and discharging with the most punctilious accuracy his duties in every relation of life. But, in order to his doing so, he is accommodated with all those exterior advantages which command awe, and attract respect, although entirely adventitious to excellence of principle. He is munificent, but his fortune bears out his generosity; he is affectionate in his domestic relations, but the devoted attachment of his family leaves him no temptation to be otherwise; his temperament is averse from excess, his passions are under the command of his reason; his courage has been so often proved, that he can safely, and without reproach of the world, prefer the dictates of christianity to the rules of modern honour; and, in adventuring himself into danger, he has all the strength and address of Lovelace himself to trust to. Sir Charles encounters no misfortunes, and can hardly be said to undergo any trials. The author, in a word, has sent him forth

——— Victorious,
Happy, and glorious.

The only dilemma to which he is exposed in the course of the seven volumes, is the doubt which of two beautiful and accomplished women, excellent in disposition, and high in rank, sister excellencies, as it were, both being devotedly attached to him, he shall be pleased to select for his bride; and this with so small a shade of partiality towards either, that we cannot conceive his happiness to be endangered wherever his lot may fall, except by a generous compassion for her whom he must necessarily relinquish. Whatever other difficulties surround him occasionally, vanish before his courage and address; and he is almost secure to make friends, and even converts, of those whose machinations may for a moment annoy him. In a word, Sir Charles Grandison «walks the course» without competition or rivalry.

All this does well enough in a funeral sermon or monumental inscription, where, by privilege of suppressing the worst qualities and exaggerating the better, such images of perfection are sometimes presented. But, in the living world, a state of trial and a valley of tears, such unspotted worth, such unvarying perfection, is not to be met with; and, what is still

more important, it could not, if we suppose it to have existence, be attended by all those favours of fortune which are accumulated upon Richardson's hero; — and hence the fatal objection of Sir Charles Grandison being the

«Faultless monster that the world ne'er saw.»

It is not the moral and religious excellence of Sir Charles which the reader is so much disposed to quarrel with, as that, while Richardson designs to give a high moral lesson by the success of his hero, he has failed through resting that success on circumstances which have nothing to do either with morality or religion, but might have been, if indeed they are not, depicted as the properties of Lovelace himself. It is impossible that any very deep lesson can be derived from contemplating a character, at once of unattainable excellence, and which is placed in circumstances of worldly ease and prosperity that render him entirely superior to temptation. Propose the example of Sir Charles Grandison to the sordid spirit, he will answer, I will be generous when I have such an estate — to the unkind brother or the cold friend, I will be affectionate, is the ready answer, when I meet such reciprocity of tenderness. Ask him who

fears the reproach of the world, why he gives or accepts a challenge? — I would do neither, he replies, were my reputation for courage established like that of Sir Charles Grandison. The timid may excuse himself for not being bold in the defence of innocence, because he has neither Sir Charles's resolution, nor that inimitable command of his sword, which enables that hero to baffle, and, in case of need, to disarm, all who may oppose his interference. Even the libertine will plead difference of temperament and habits, and contend, that Sir Charles had all his passions under such complete subjugation, that there was no more danger of his being hurried off by them, than that his six long-tailed horses should run away with his chariot. He does, unquestionably, now and then, in his communications to Dr Bartlett and others, speak of his naturally passionate temperament as if it were still existing; but we see so little of its effects, or rather it appears, in spite of his own report, so utterly subdued and withered within him, that the only purpose of the confession seems to be, the adding this trait of modesty and humiliation to the more splendid virtues of the hero.

After all, there may, in this reasoning, be much of the perversity of human nature, which is always ready, like Job's tempter, to dispute

that worth which has not been proved by adversity. But it was human nature which the author proposed to instruct; and, therefore, to human nature and its feelings he should have adapted his example of piety and morality.

To take the matter less gravely, and consider *Sir Charles Grandison* as a work of amusement, it must be allowed, that the interest is destroyed in a great measure by the unceasing ascendency given to the fortune as well as the character of the hero. We feel he is too much under the special protection of the author to need any sympathy of ours, and that he has nothing to dread from all the Pollexfens, O'Haras, and so forth, in the world, so long as Richardson is decidedly his friend. Neither are our feelings much interested about him, when his fate is undetermined. He evinces too little passion, and certainly no preference, being clearly ready, with heart and good-will, to marry either Clementina or Harriet Byron, as circumstances may render most proper, and to bow gracefully upon the hand of the rejected lady, and bid her adieu.

Lady Bradshaigh, the frankest of Richardson's correspondents, states this objection to him in full force, and without ceremony: — «You have made me bounce off my chair with reading that two good girls were in love with your hero, and that he was fond of both. — I have such despicable

notions of a divided love, that I cannot have an idea how a worthy object can entertain such a thought." The truth is, that Richardson was always arguing for the superiority of duty and principle over feeling, and, not very wisely perhaps, in an abstract view at least, set himself willingly to the task of combating even the sentiment of honest and virtuous love, considered as a passion, although implanted by nature in our breasts for the wisest, as well as kindest purposes, and leading, were it only by carrying our views and wishes beyond ourselves, to many more good consequences, under the modification of reason, than to evil, numerous as these may be, when it hurries us beyond this. So far did the author carry his contempt and defiance of Cupid, who had, down to his time, been the omnipotent deity of romance, as even to alarm Lady Bradshaigh by some hypothetical arguments in favour of polygamy, a system which goes to exclude individual preferences with a vengeance.

All this must be pardoned to the honest and kind-hearted Richardson, partly for argument's sake, partly because he had very high notions of the rights of the husband, as well as those of the master. It may be some comfort to the ladies to know, as appears from some passages in his correspondence, that, like James the

First of England, his despotism consisted more in theory than in practice; and that Mrs Richardson appears to have had her full share of practical authority and control in whatever related to their quiet family.

Regarding Sir Charles, then, merely as the twenty thousand prize, which was to be drawn by either of the ladies who might be so lucky as to win it, and whose own inclinations scarcely decided him more to the one than to the other, it is clear that the interest must rest — no very flattering thing for the fair sex — upon that predilection which the reader may entertain for the English or for the Italian lady. And with respect to Miss Byron, amiable as she is represented, and with qualities supposed to approach almost to those of Clarissa, in her happiest state, there attaches a sort of indelicacy, of which we must suppose Clarissa, in similar circumstances entirely incapable. She literally forms a league in Sir Charles's family, and among his friends, for the purpose of engaging his affections, and is contented to betray the secret of her own love, even when she believes it unreturned — a secret which every delicate mind holds so sacred — not only to old Dr Bartlett, but to all her own relations, and the Lord knows whom besides, who are all to be edified by the perusal of Sir Charles's letters.

Most readers have felt that this conduct on Miss Byron's part, though designed only to elevate the hero, has the contrary effect of degrading the character of the heroine.

The real heroine of the work, and the only one in whose fortunes we take a deep and decided interest, is the unhappy Clementina, whose madness, and indeed her whole conduct, is sketched with the same exquisite pencil which drew the distresses of Clarissa. There are in those passages relating to her, upon which we do not dwell, familiar as they must be to all our readers, scenes which equal any thing that Richardson ever wrote, and which would alone be sufficient to rank him with the highest name in his line of composition. These, with other detached passages in the work, serve to show that it was no diminution in Richardson's powers, but solely the adoption of an inferior plan, which renders his two earlier works preferable to *Sir Charles Grandison.*

The structure of *Sir Charles Grandisou* being wholly different from that of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, enabled the author entirely to avoid, in his last work, some free and broad descriptions, which were unavoidable while detailing the enterprises of Mr B — or Lovelace. But though he was freed from all temptation to fall into indelicate warmth of description, a fault which

the grosser age of our fathers endured better than ours, Richardson was still unfortunate in assuming the tone of elegance and of high fashion, to which, in his last work, he evidently aspired. Mr B — is a country squire; the Harlowes, a purse-proud and vulgar race; Lovelace himself a *roué* in point of manners; Lord M — has the manners and sentiments of an old rural gossip; and the vivacity of Miss Howe often approaches to vulgarity. Many models must have been under the observant eye of Richardson, extensive as his acquaintanee was through all, excepting the highest circle of fashion, from which he might have drawn such characters, or at least have borrowed their manners and language.

But our author's aspiring to trace the manners of the great, as in Sir Charles Grandison, has called down the censure of an unquestionable judge, and who apears, in his case, disposed to be a severe critic. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, in her inimitable *Letters*, has the following passages: — » His Anna Howe and Charlotte Grandison are recommended as patterns of charming pleasantry, and applauded by his saint-like dames, who mistake folly for wit and humour, and impudence and ill-nature for spirit and fire. Charlotte behaves like a humoursome child, and should have been used like one, and whipped in the presence of her friendly

confederate, Harriet. — He (Richardson) has no idea of the manners of high life; his old Lord M — talks in the style of a country justice; and his virtuous young ladies romp like the wenches round a May-pole. Such liberties as pass between Mr Lovelace and his cousin are not to be excused by the relation. I should have been much astonished if Lord Denbigh should have offered to kiss me; and I dare swear, Lord Trentham never attempted such impertinence to you.»[1]

It is no disrespect to Richardson to say, that he could not have had many opportunities of seeing the manners of high life; for society is formed upon principles different entirely from a selection of the best and wisest men; and the author's condition, though far from being low, indigent, or disrespectable, placed him in a humbler and happier rank. But there is one sort of good-breeding which is natural and unchangeable, and another, which, consisting of an acquaintance with the evanescent manners and fashions of the day, is merely conventional, and is perpetually changing, like the modes of dress observed in the same circles. The prin-

---

[1] Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, vol. iv. p. 182.

ciples of the first are imprinted in every bosom of sense and delicacy. But to be ignorant of the latter, only shows that an author is not very conversant with the society where these flitting rules are observed, or, what may be equally the case, is incapable of tracing their changeful and fading hues. To transgress the rules of natural good-breeding, or to represent characters by whom they should be practised as doing so, is a want of taste which must adhere as a blemish to the work so long as it is read. But crimes against conventional good-breeding run a prescriptive course, and cease to be observed when the rules transgressed have, according to the usual mutability of fashion, been superseded by others. Such errors are like Livy's patavinity, which became imperceptible to latter readers. It was natural that a person of Lady Mary Wortley Montague's taste and rank should be shocked at the want of decorum which she complains of, but at this distance of time we are not sufficiently acquainted with the fashions of George the Second's reign to share her displeasure. We know in general that salutation continued for a long period to be permitted by fashion, as much as the more lately licensed freedoms of shaking hands and offering the arm: and with this general knowledge it is of little consequence to us, at what particular year of God men of qua-

lity were restrained from kissing their cousins, or whether Richardson has made an anachronism in that important matter. The merit of Lovelace, considered as a portrait, remains to us the same, notwithstanding that wig, which is now frozen to his head amid his sentimental attendance in the ivy-coppice, and anon skimmed into the fire when he receives the fatal news of Clarissa's death. We think as little of dress or fashion as when we gaze on the portraits of Vandyke, without asking whether the ruff and the sleeve be or be not precisely of the cut of the period. Lovelace, whether exactly corresponding to the minute fashions of his own time or no, continues equally to be what he is described in the nervous language of Johnson, in his *Life of Rowe*. «The character of Lothario seems to have been expanded by Richardson into that of Lovelace; but he has excelled his original in the moral effect of the fiction. Lothario with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be despised, retains too much of the spectator's kindness. It was in the power of Richardson alone, to teach us at once esteem and detestation; to make virtnous resentment overpower all the benevolence which wit, and elegance, and courage, naturally excite; and to lose at last the hero in the villain.»

Still, however, it is impossible altogether to

vindicate Richardson from Lady Mary's charge, or to pronounce him wholly guiltless of trespassing upon the essence of good breeding, as well as upon its temporary rules and modifications. Lady G—— has as much horse-play in her raillery as Miss Howe, and her lord is a double of Mr Hickman. Now there ought to have been a difference betwixt the vivacity of a country-bred young lady, trained up under a sufficiently vulgar mother, and that of Miss Grandison, who had always lived in the very first society; and this Lady Mary has a just right to complain of.

There is a fault also attaches to the manners of Sir Charles Grandison himself, though doubtless intended as a model of elegance and courtesy. The very care which the author has taken to deck his manners and conversation with every becoming grace of action and words, has introduced a heavy formality, and a sort of flourishing politeness, into his whole person and deportment. His manner, in short, seems too much studied, and his talk too stiffly complimentary, too like a printed book, to use a Scottish phrase, to permit us to associate the ideas of gentleman-like ease and affability, either to the one or the other. We believe this objection has been very generally entertained by the fairer sex, for whose protection the laws of politeness are introduced, and who must therefore be the best judges how far they are complied with.

Notwithstanding these imperfections, and the disadvantage which a new work always sustains at first comparison with its predecessors, Richardson's fame was not diminished by the publication of his *Sir Charles Grandison*, and his fortune would have been increased but for a mercantile fraud, of a nature peculiarly audacious. By some means which he could not detect, sheet after sheet of the work as it passed the press, was stolen from the author's printing-house, and sent to Dublin, where, availing themselves of the relations between the two countries as they then stood, some unprincipled booksellers prepared an Irish edition of the book, which they were thus enabled to bring into the market as soon as the author; and, by underselling him, greatly limited his deserved profits. Richardson appears in vain to have sought redress for this injustice by means of his correspondents in Ireland. The union with the sister kingdom has, among other beneficial effects, had that of rendering such frauds impossible in future.

Such is the succinct history of Richardson's productions, and such was its conclusion. It is only necessary to mention, that, besides his three celebrated novels, he completed that collection of *Familiar Letters*, the commencement of which led the way to *Pamela*, — «a work," says Mrs Barbauld, «usually found in the ser-

vant's drawer, but which, when so found, has not unfrequently detained the eye of the mistress, wondering all the while by what secret charm she was induced to turn over a book, apparently too low for her perusal, and that charm was — Richardson," This work, which we have never seen, is said, by the same authority, to illustrate the extreme accuracy with which Richardson had attended to all the duties of life.

Richardson also wrote, in order to assist Dr Johnson, the ninety-seventh number of the *Rambler*, which the editor ushered in by the following deserved encomium: — «The reader is indebted for this day's entertainment to an author from whom the age has received greater favours, who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue.»

In our detailed remarks on Richardson's several novels, we have, as usual, anticipated much which we otherwise had to say concerning his general merits as an author. It will be to his immortal praise, that he was perhaps the first author in this line of composition who, in fictitious narrative, threw aside the trappings of romance, with all its extravagance, and appealed

to the awakened passions of the human heart. The circumstances which led him to descend from the stilts of bombast into the walks of nature, are described in his own account of the origin of *Pamela*, and he quickly discovered that it was not in humble life only that those feelings exist which find sympathy in every reader's bosom; for, if the sympathy with the distresses and the magnanimity of Clarissa be not universal, we cannot, we own, envy those who are proof against their charm.

Richardson was well qualified to be the discoverer of a new style of writing, for he was a cautious, deep, and minute examinator of the human heart, and, like Cooke or Parry, left neither head, bay, nor inlet behind him, until he had traced its soundings, and laid it down in his chart, with all its minute sinuosities, its depths, and its shallows. Hence the high, and, comparatively considered, perhaps the undue superiority assigned by Johnson to Richardson over Fielding, against whom he seems to have entertained some prejudice. In one passage he asserts, that «there is more knowledge of the human heart in one letter of Richardson's than in all *Tom Jones*.»[1] And, in another, he thus

---

[1] Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. 1793, vol. ii. p. 30.

explains the proposition: — «There is all the difference in the world between characters of nature and characters of manners, and there is this difference between the characters of Fielding and those of Richardson. Characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood by a more superficial observer than characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart.»[1] Again, in comparing these two distinguished authors, the critic uses this illustration — «that there was as great a difference between them, as between a man who knew how a watch was made, and a man who could tell the hour by looking at the dial-plate.»[2] Dissenting as we do from the conclusions to be deduced from Dr Johnson's simile, we would rather so modify it as to describe both authors as excellent mechanics; the time-pieces of Richardson showing a great deal of the internal work by which the index is regulated; while those of Fielding merely pointed to the hour of the day, being all that most men desire to know. Or, to take a more manageable com-

---

[1] Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. 1793, vol. i. p. 508.

[2] Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. 1793, vol. i. p. 508.

parison, the analogy between the writings of Fielding and Richardson resembles that which free, bold, and true sketches bear to paintings which have been very minutely laboured, and, amid their excellence, still exhibit some of the heaviness which almost always attends the highest degree of finishing. This, indeed, is admitted by Johnson himself, in his reply to the observation of the Honourable Thomas Erskine, that Richardson was tedious. — » Why, sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted, that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider story only as giving occasion to the sentiment.» Were we to translate the controversy into plain language, it might be summed up in pronouncing the works of Richardson the more instructive, those of Fielding the more amusing, and that a reader might select the one or the other for his studies, according to Tony Lumpkin's phrase, as he felt himself «in a concatenation accordingly.»

It is impossible to tell whether Richardson's peculiar and circumstantial mode of narrative arose entirely out of the mode in which he evolves his story, by the letters of the actors, or whether his early partiality for letter-writing was not rather founded upon his innate love of detail. But these talents and propensities must have

borne upon and fortified each other. To the letter-writer every event is recent, and is painted immediately while under the eye, with reference to its relative importance to what has past and what is to come. All is, so to speak, painted in the fore-ground, and nothing in the distance. A game at whist, if the subject of a letter, must be detailed as much at length, as a debate in the House of Commons, upon a subject of great national interest; and hence, perhaps, that tendency to prolixity, of which the readers of Richardson frequently complain.

There is this additional disadvantage, tending to the same disagreeable impression, that incidents are, in many instances, detailed again and again by the various actors, to their different correspondents. If this has the advantage of placing the characters, each in their own peculiar light, and contrasting their thoughts, plans, and sentiments, it is at least partly balanced, by arresting the progress of the story, which stands still while the characters show all their paces, like horses in the manege, without advancing a yard. But then it gives the reader, as Mrs Barbauld well remarks, the advantage of being thoroughly acquainted with those in whose fate he is to be interested. «In consequence of this,» adds that accomplished lady, «our feelings are not transient, elicited here and there

by a pathetic stroke, but we regard his characters as real personages, whom we know and converse with, and whose fate remains to be decided in the course of events. »[1] The minute style of Richardson is accordingly attended with this peculiar advantage, that as strong a light as can be necessary is thrown on every personage who advances on the scene, and that we have as distinct an idea of the individual and peculiar character of every female in Mrs Sinclair's family, whom it is necessary to name; of the greedy and hypocritical Joseph Leman; of the plausible Captain Singleton, and of Lovelace's other agents, as we have of Lovelace himself. The character of Colonel Morden, for example, although we see so little of him, is quite individual. He is high-spirited, bold, and skilful at his weapon; a man of the world and a man of honour; neither violent enough to precipitate his revenge, nor forbearing enough to avoid grasping it when the fitting opportunity offers. The awe in which he is held by the Harlowes, even before his appearance; the respect which Clarissa entertains for him as a natural protector, prepares us for his approach as he enters on the scene, like the avenger of blood, too late, indeed, to save Cla-

---

[1] Life of Richardson, vol. i. p. 82.

rissa, but a worthy vindicator of her wrongs, and a no less worthy conqueror of Lovelace. Whatever piety and forbearance there is in his cousin's last charge to such a man as Colonel Morden, we cannot for a moment be either surprised or sorry that it is disobeyed.

It must not be overlooked, that, by the circumstantial detail of minute, trivial, and even uninteresting circumstances, the author gives to his fiction anair of reality that can scarcely otherwise be obtained. In every real narrative, he who tells it, dwells upon slight and inconsiderable circumstances, no otherwise interesting than because they are associated in his mind with the more important events which he desires to communicate. De Foe, who understood, and availed himself on all occasions of this mode of garnishing an imaginary history, with all the minute accompaniments which distinguish a true one, was scarce a greater master of this peculiar art, than was our author Richardson.

Still, with all these advantages, which so peculiarly adapted the mode of carrying on the story by epistolary correspondence to Richardson's peculiar genius, it has its corresponding defects. In order that all may be written which must be known for the purpose of the narrative, the characters must frequently write, when it would be more natural for them to be acting—

must frequently write what it is not natural to write at all, — and must at all times write a great deal oftener, and a great deal more than one would now think human life has time for. But these arguments did not probably weigh much with Richardson, an inveterate letter-writer from his youth upwards, and certainly as indefatigable (we had almost said formidable) a correspondent as any of the characters he has drawn.

Richardson was himself aware of the luxuriance of his imagination, and that he was sometimes apt to exceed the patience of the reader. He indulged his own vein, by writing without any fixed plan, and at great length, which he afterwards curtailed and compressed; so that, strange as it may seem, his compositions were reduced almost one half in point of size before they were committed to the press. In his first two novels also, he showed much attention to the plot, and though diffuse and prolix in narration, can never be said to be rambling or desultory. No characters are introduced but for the purpose of advancing the plot; and there are but few of those digressive dialogues and dissertations with which *Sir Charles Grandison* abounds. The story keeps the direct road, though it moves slowly. But in his last work the author is much more excursive. There is indeed little in the plot to

require attention; the various events, which are successively narrated, being no otherwise connected together, than as they place the character of the hero in some new and peculiar point of view. The same may be said of the numerous and long conversations upon religious and moral topics, which compose so great a part of the work, that a venerable old lady whom we well knew, when in advanced age she became subject to drowsy fits, chose to hear *Sir Charles Grandison* read to her as she sat in her elbow-chair, in preference to any other work, «because," said she, «should I drop asleep in course of the reading, I am sure, when I awake, I shall have lost none of the story, but shall find the party, where I left them, *conversing in the cedar parlour.*" It is probable, after all, that the prolixity of Richardson, which, to our giddy-paced times, is the greatest fault of his writing, was not such an objection to his contemporaries. Those who with patience had studied rant and bombast in the folios of Scuderi, could not readily tire of nature, sense, and genius, in the octavos of Richardson. But a modern reader may be permitted to wish that *Clarissa* had been a good deal abridged at the beginning, and *Sir Charles Grandison* at the end; that the last two volumes of *Pamela* had been absolutely cancelled, and

the second much compressed. And, upon the whole, it might be desired, that many of those trivial details of dresses and decorations, which relish, to say truth, of the mantua-maker's shops in which Richardson made his first efforts at composition, were altogether abolished, especially where they are put into the letters of sensible persons, or impertinently thrust upon us during the currency of a scene of passion. It requires the recollection of Richardson's highest powers to maintain our respect for him, where he makes Lovelace, amidst all his triumph at Clarissa's elopement, describe her dress to Belford, from top to toe, with all the professional accuracy of a man-milliner. But it is ungracious to dwell on defects redeemed by so many excellencies.

The style of Richardson was of that pliable and facile kind, which could, with slight variety, be adapted to what best befitted his various personages. When he wrote in his higher characters, it was copious, expressive, and appropriate; but, through the imperfection of his education, not always strictly elegant, or even accurate. During his life, the common cant, as usual, was, that he received assistance, which, as a practical admission of personal incompetence to the task they have undertaken, we believe few

men of reputed talent would stoop to accept of. It is now known that he wrote his whole works without any such aid, excepting the *Ode to Wisdom*, by Mr Carter, or a number of Latin quotations, furnished by a learned friend to bedizen the epistle of Elias Brand.

The power of Richardson's painting in his deeper scenes of tragedy, never has been, and probably never will be excelled. Those of distressed innocence, as in the history of Clarissa and Clementina, rend the very heart; and few, jealous of manly equanimity, should read them for the first time in the presence of others. In others, where the same heroines, and particularly Clarissa, display a noble elevation of soul, rising above earthly considerations and earthly oppression, the reader is perhaps as much elevated towards a pure sympathy with virtue and religion as uninspired composition can raise him. His scenes of unmixed horror, as the deaths of Belton and of the infamous Sinclair, are as dreadful as the former are elevating; and they are directed to the same noble purpose, increasing our fear and hatred of vice, as the former are qualified to augment our love and veneration of virtue. The lighter qualities of the novelist were less proper to this distinguished author than those which are allied to tragedy. Yet, not even in these was

Richardson deficient; and his sketches of this kind display the same accurate knowledge of humanity manifested in his higher efforts. His comedy is not overstrained, and never steps beyond the bounds of nature, and he never sacrifices truth and probability to brilliancy of effect. Without what is properly termed wit, the author possessed liveliness and gaiety sufficient to colour those scenes; and though he is never, like his rival Fielding, irresistibly ludicrous, nor indeed, ever essays to be so, there is a fund of quaint drollery pervades his lighter sketches, which renders them very agreeable to the reader.

The change of taste and of fashion may, perhaps, from the causes we have freely stated, have thrown a temporary shade over Richardson's popularity. Or, perhaps he may, in the present generation, be only paying, by comparative neglect, the price of the very high reputation which he enjoyed during his own age. For if immortality, or any thing approaching to it, is granted to authors and their works, it seems only to be on the conditions assigned to that of Nourjahad, in the beautiful Eastern tale, that they shall be liable to occasional intervals of slumber and comparative oblivion. Yet, under all these disadvantages, the genius of

Richardson must be ever acknowledged to have done honour to the language in which he wrote, and his manly and virtuous application of his talents to the service of morality, and to human nature in general.

BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek
MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Scott, Walter,

The Works of Walter Scott, Esq

Bd.: 87

Zwickau 1826

Regensburg, Staatliche Bibliothek -- 999/Angl.25(86/88
urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11081015-0